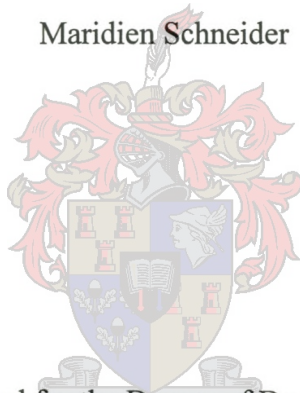


CICERO: “*HARUSPEX*” *VICISSITUDINUM MUTATIONISQUE REI PUBLICAE*:
A STUDY OF CICERO’S MERIT AS POLITICAL ANALYST

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:

SYNOPSIS

The purpose of this study is to explore Marcus Tullius Cicero's awareness and interpretation of contemporary political events as reflected in his private correspondence during the last years of both the Roman republic and his own life. Cicero's correspondence gives a detailed view of current political events in Rome and constitutes, with Caesar's own narrative, our major contemporary evidence for the circumstances of the civil war of 49 BC.

The dissertation takes as *Leitmotiv* Cicero's own judgement of the state as 'sacrificial victim' to the ambitions of individual politicians, with as metaphor his examination of a 'dying' body politic in the manner of a *haruspex* inspecting the entrails of a sacrificial animal. It poses the question whether Cicero understood the message of political decline signalled by the 'entrails' of the 'carcass' of the *res publica*, and whether this ability in its turn enabled him to anticipate future political development in Rome.

In what follows, the theoretical input of Cicero's predecessors, their perceptions of constitutional development, and of Roman politics in particular, as well as Cicero's own perception of their political theories will be considered in order to determine the extent of Cicero's awareness of a larger pattern of political events, and how consistent he was in his analyses of such patterns, that is, to what extent Cicero may be considered seriously as a political analyst.

SAMEVATTING

Die oogmerk van die verhandeling is om vas te stel of Marcus Tullius Cicero met reg daarop kan aanspraak maak dat hy eietydse politieke gebeure sinvol kon interpreteer as die manifestering van 'n nuwe politieke stroming wat die voorkoms van die toekomstige Romeinse politieke toneel sou bepaal.

Cicero se waarneming en begrip van eietydse politieke gebeure in die laaste paar jaar van die Romeinse Republiek en sy eie lewe word tekenend weerspieël in sy persoonlike briefwisseling uit die tydperk 51 tot 43 v.C. As historiese dokument bied hierdie korrespondensie, as primêre bronomateriaal, naas die behoue kontemporêre berigging van Julius Caesar, die enigste ander kontemporêre getuigenis vir die uitbreek en nadraai van die burgeroorlog van 49 v.C.

Die sentrale tema van die verhandeling is Cicero se persepsie van die Romeinse staat as die 'slagoffer' van magsugtige politieke rolspelers. Cicero se rol as waarnemer en politieke analis word uitgebeeld deur die metafoor van 'n *haruspex* (profeet) wat die 'ingewande' van die 'karkas' van die gestorwe Romeinse Republiek ondersoek. Die kernvraag wat gestel word, is of Cicero inderdaad daartoe in staat was om die boodskap van politieke verandering raak te lees, die implikasies daarvan te begryp en daarvolgens 'n beredeneerde toekomsprojeksie van die Romeinse politieke toneel te maak.

Om te bepaal of Cicero meriete verdien as 'n politieke analis, word die volgende kriteria as toetsstene gebruik: die teoretiese insette van Cicero se voorgangers en sy beheersing van sodanige *politieke teoretisering*, die mate waarin hy *konsekwent* en *objektief* kon *oordeel*, en die mate waarin hy teorie en die praktiese werklikheid van die Romeinse politieke situasie kon *integreer*.

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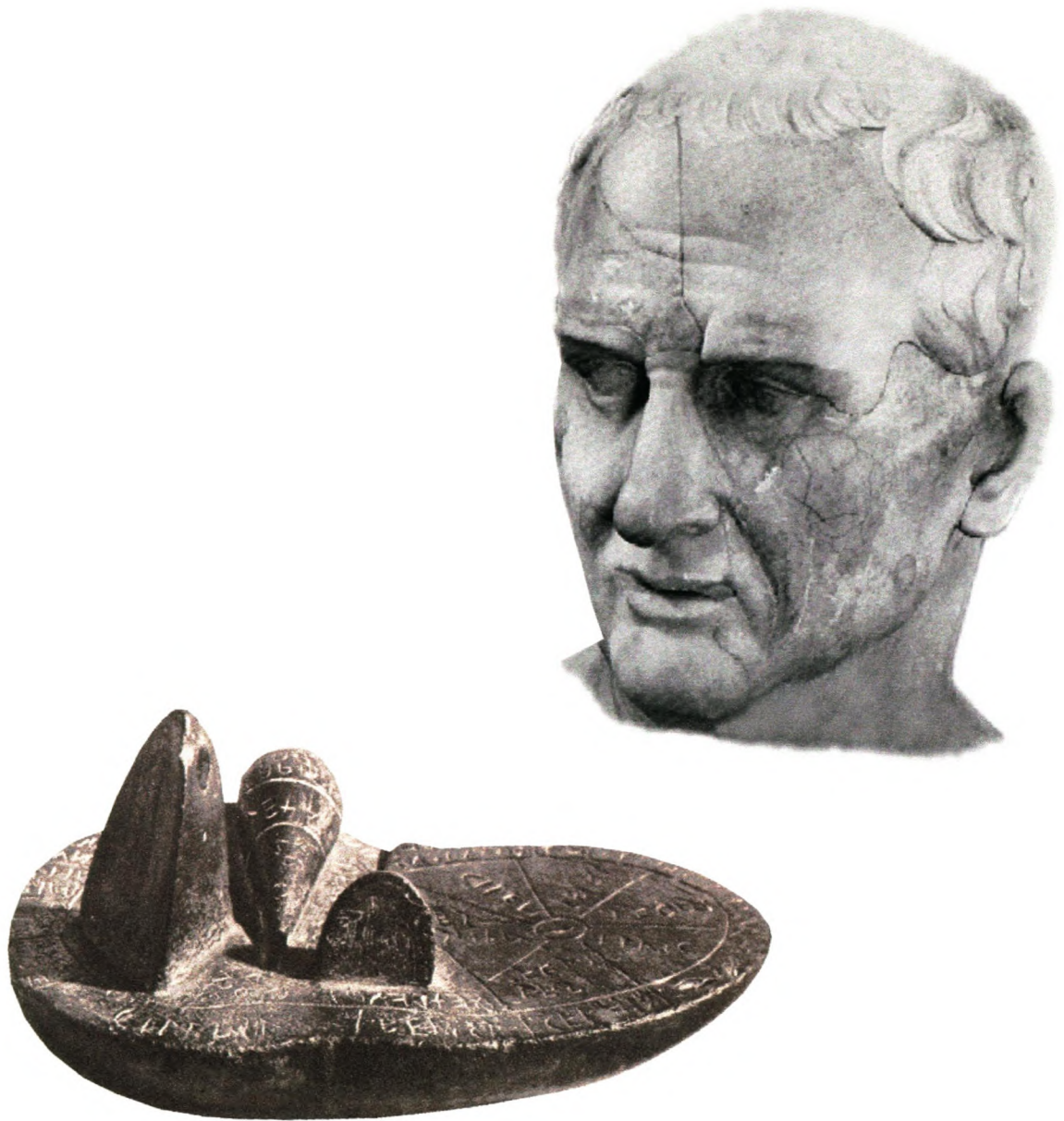
Collage on the opposite page:

Portrait-bust of Cicero: scanned version and adapted from Grant (1964:248).

The Etruscan bronze liver of Piacenza, model of a sheep's liver employed in the *disciplina Etrusca*, the art of divination by examining the entrails of sacrificial animals. Side view, repeated on page 163 of the Epilogue.

Cf. the Internet <http://www.lexiline.com>
<http://member.ncbi.com/Pdictus/liver.htm>

To view the upper surface of the Piacenza liver, see Cristofani (1979:96-7).



Parentibus Optimis

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I. ORIGINES

1. Introduction

1.1 Exordium

This dissertation sets out to note and analyse Cicero's awareness and interpretation of contemporary political events as reflected in his correspondence during the last years of both the Roman republic and his own life. It takes as *Leitmotiv* Cicero's own judgement of the state as 'sacrificial victim' of the ambitions of individual politicians, with as metaphor his examination of a 'slain' body politic in the manner of a *haruspex* inspecting the entrails of a sacrificial animal.

Much of the scholarly controversy relating to Cicero and his expression of his views on some of the major Roman political events of the first century BC is broadly relevant, and very complex in its ramifications. It is therefore remarkable that readers have tended to overlook the significance of Cicero's potential to put contemporary political events into a long-term perspective. Amidst general recognition of Cicero's ability to expound his knowledge and experience in the fields of rhetoric, history, philosophy, and above all, the practice of politics, a recurrent feature of Ciceronian scholarship is a tendency to relate, in one way or another, Cicero's observations of contemporary political events to his own political motivation. This approach has resulted to a great extent in adverse criticism, where the main focus is on Cicero's personal limitations, such as his so-called vanity and egocentricity. These latter are both considered as obstacles to his ability to evaluate the politics of his time. They are therefore also considered as partly responsible for his perceived failure to have foreseen the advent of a new political order as the inevitable consequence of the changing political and social circumstances of the first century BC. According to this negative line of reasoning, Cicero has virtually no merit as an observer and interpreter of the political situation of the late Roman republic.

Scholarly opinion concerning Cicero's perception and view of the political situation of the late Roman republic, especially the period of the late fifties BC and the years of Caesar's dictatorship, still tends, after a century, to favour a negative estimate of Cicero's

use or lack of empirical political thought, reminiscent of the late nineteenth century criticism spearheaded by Drumann and Mommsen.¹ Callies (1982) credits Cicero as being capable of recognising the crisis situation of his age (106), but considers the depth of his perception, his understanding and analysis of the political situation to be inadequate (117). Even Habicht (1990:5) in his much more positive portrayal of Cicero as politician underestimates Cicero's analytic ability in relation to Roman politics. Although he acknowledges the notion that Cicero was capable of analysing the political situation of the day, he does not elaborate the issue; instead he offers only a vague silhouette: 'Cicero's way of thinking was ... primarily and thoroughly political, although different from that of Caesar' and 'it worked in a different way: less blunt and less direct, always reflecting, often unsure of its direction.' This statement of Habicht's immediately evokes the question: *how* was Cicero's way of thinking *different* from that of Caesar, *how* did it *work*, what are the implications and meaning of the adjectives *blunt*, *direct*, *reflecting* and *unsure*?

Granted that it is generally accepted that the conduct of the conventional Roman politician was seldom to be separated from political self-interest and that most politicians, as men of action in the political arena, are often not inclined toward abstract or theoretical thought, it must also be admitted that Cicero was not an exemplar of the traditional Roman politician. Despite the shortcomings of his lack of noble pedigree or senatorial ancestry, in addition to his natural aversion to military service and war, he nevertheless pursued a successful political career and proudly asserted that he had been acclaimed *pater patriae* in the year of his consulship. Cicero emphasised that he was elected consul with the approval of the *entire Roman people*.² After 58 BC, when Cicero was banished for eighteen months, he was forced virtually to abstain from active participation in Roman politics. Nevertheless, even though Cicero had virtually ceased to be an active politician, his mind was still politically oriented. This is evident from his frequent allusions to contemporary political events to be found scattered throughout his philosophical, rhetorical and theoretical writings of the period between 54 BC and 43 BC (when Cicero found himself a mere observer on the outskirts of Roman political activity).

¹ Cf. Mommsen's well-known scathing criticism (1856:III.619) of Cicero as '*Staatsmann ohne Einsicht, Ansicht und Absicht ... [er] ist nie mehr gewesen als ein kurzsichtiger Egoist*' (emphasis mine).

² Cic. *Agr.* 2.4, 7, 17.

This period also witnessed the politically eventful years of 51 BC to 50 BC when Cicero reluctantly took up the governorship of Cilicia. During this time tension was steadily rising as the power struggle between Caesar and Pompey escalated. Mommsen (1922:620) considered Cicero's correspondence during his proconsulship in Cilicia to be 'matt und leer,' translated by Dixon (1929:575) as 'stale and empty'. This statement does not appear to bear scrutiny. On the contrary, Cicero's correspondence with Caelius (his younger and politically opportunistic contemporary) shows a keen interest not only in contemporary Roman political issues, but also in city gossip and scandal. Furthermore, it can be argued that mental quiet and repose, emotionally at remove from the turbulence of active politics, is normally the mood in which observation is usually supposed to yield the best results. In this regard the relatively isolated location of Cilicia and its governor's separation from mainstream politics, as well as his distance from the most prominent political role-players at the time, appeared to favour Cicero's ability to perceive current political events as elements in a trend and to put them into perspective.

Cicero's reaction to the current political events in Rome of 51- 49 BC is well-documented in his correspondence with his intimate friend and confidant Titus Pomponius Atticus. It shows considerable fluctuation in his emotional and psychological condition. Even though Cicero found himself removed from the hub of political stirrings, he appears in his correspondence as a man mentally not disentangled from contemporary political issues. Much has been written about Cicero's constant wavering, but not enough consideration has been given to the possibility that beneath Cicero's apparent wavering there might be serious reasoning, his attempt to make sense of the unprecedented political events of the period of the fifties BC that culminated in the civil war of 49 BC.³ Fluctuations in his reasoning about current events may indicate an attempt to build a consistent theoretical construct from the fragments of political information that were possibly coagulating into a pattern in his perception.

³ Recently Bernett (1995) identified three models used by Cicero to explain contemporary political events, discounting some of the criticism prevalent in earlier German scholarship which portrayed Cicero as an inadequate theorist. Her study supports the argument that Cicero was indeed able to apply theory to the information at his disposal, and that, by doing so, he was able to put contemporary events into a longer-term perspective.

The issue at stake, then, is: to what extent was Cicero aware of the larger pattern of political events at any given time, and how consistent was he in his analyses of such patterns, that is, to what extent may Cicero be taken seriously as a political analyst? In order to ascertain Cicero's merit or demerits as a potential political analyst I intend to investigate to what extent Cicero had the analytical insight needed to recognise and evaluate the implications and possible consequences of contemporary political events, and whether he was at all able to assess objectively Caesar's seizure of power in 49 BC, or to anticipate future political development in Rome. This investigation will of necessity involve close readings of the writings current with the events he discusses, as well as of writings that look back on past events.

To achieve a balanced view of Cicero's perception of political change in the closing years of the Roman Republic I shall concentrate mainly on his correspondence with respectively Marcus Caelius Rufus, whom Cicero had asked to act as home correspondent during his absence from Rome, and with Atticus. The two sets of correspondence together give a detailed view of current political events in Rome (51 - 49 BC). These constitute, with Caesar's own narrative, our major evidence for the ensuing tide of civil war. Cicero's reactions to the information received in these letters are articulated in his frank and apparent sincere letters to Atticus and also in the later letters of 43 BC to Brutus, in which he looks back on the years of Caesar's dictatorship.

Cicero was, like most ancient thinkers, of the opinion that philosophy should be of practical value and that politics should be guided by philosophy. Philosophy should therefore inform politics, set its course and provide orientation and order. After Cicero's exile and his subsequent exclusion from active Roman politics, he was moved to re-examine some of the perceptions he had held about the *res publica*, statesmanship, and the pursuit of glory. To strengthen his own views on these subjects he had to search for a basis in philosophy. As a self-professed adherent of the scepticism of the New Academy (*Off.* 2.7-8) which subjected everything to minute analysis, Cicero practised a method of reasoning where the concepts of probability and improbability replaced the concepts of certainty and uncertainty. This method of reasoning is especially noticeable in Cicero's correspondence with Atticus, where his manner of reasoning, easily mistaken for

vacillation, is actually a deliberate technique that enables him to present alternate views on political issues.

The purpose of this study, then, is to examine the hypothesis that Cicero's use of his knowledge of philosophy enabled him to approach the Roman political situation theoretically.⁴ Questions to be considered when judging Cicero's potential for political insight in addition to his practical application of political theorising are the following:

Given the theoretical input of his predecessors' views of Roman politics and his own reception of their extant political theories, did Cicero, when he became increasingly convinced of the potential ascendancy of Caesar, believe that the dictatorship of 49 BC was merely a phase in a cycle of constitutions as depicted in Plato's Πολιτεία (Cic. *Div.* 2.6-7)⁵ or did he imagine or envisage the possibility of a reconstitution of a lost Republic as mentioned in *Fam.* 6.21? To what extent did he interpret individual events as significant trends in the transformation of the Roman political scene? Evidence seems to indicate the probable influence of the Roman concept of political decline and resurgence. This concept, which appears prevalent in Cicero's line of reasoning, is also to be found in the literary writings of the Roman poets familiar to Cicero and in the historiography of Polybius.⁶

The corollary to all this is the further question: to what degree does Cicero's later overtly theoretical discussion appear as the result of earlier reasoning? Here one must compare Cicero's remarks during his observation of Caesar's increasing autocracy in 49 BC with the moral judgements pronounced on Caesar's domination in his philosophical works *De officiis* (a work on moral duties) and to a lesser degree *De amicitia* (a dialogue on

⁴ Cicero's application of philosophy is not always fully appreciated. Recent revival of scholarly interest in Cicero and his relation to philosophy, as reflected in for instance the collections of papers (Fortenbaugh and Steinmetz 1989, Griffin 1989, Powell 1995, Barnes and Griffin 1997) as well as a recently awakened scholarly tendency toward a reassessment of his philosophical ability, seem to indicate that Cicero had intrinsic merit as philosopher, not only for his accurate presentation of philosophical doctrines to his Roman readers, but also for the provision of an own perspective in his philosophical works as well as in his correspondence.

⁵ 'naturales esse quasdam conversiones rerum publicarum, ut eae tum a principibus tenerentur, tum a populis, aliquando a singulis'.

⁶ Cf. Chapter Six for a discussion of the Roman concept of decline and refounding as possible influence on Cicero's political thinking.

friendship).⁷ Both works were composed in 44 BC and have as titles code words from the so-called aristocratic lexicon⁸ and both appear to indicate the erosion of the established value system of the Roman oligarchy. Written in a time of political upheaval, when the meaning of political friendship had to be reconsidered, these works analyse friendship as a mechanism for power distribution among the Roman aristocratic elite. The almost simplistic moral judgements pronounced in both works also contrast with Cicero's apparently more realistic view of the complex political situation as portrayed in his correspondence.⁹

In answering the above questions one must take into consideration the degree of consistency or inconsistency that Cicero displays in his attitude to the political movers whose activities he is observing, as well as in his approach to his various correspondents. Since it is unlikely that the perceptions of the same event by any two observers will be identical, it is important to establish to what extent political prejudice influenced Cicero either to suppress or over-emphasise detail in his reaction to events as he became aware of them. In perhaps oversimplified terms one may refer to the problem of the *degree of objectivity* as well as of *consistency* of which Cicero may or may not have been capable.

Comparison of the extent to which conclusions reached by Cicero match or contrast with the conclusions of another observer such as Caelius Rufus,¹⁰ as well as with the views put

⁷ And with the fact of Caesar's death by assassination in 44 BC.

⁸ Such a judgement of the value of these works is not new. As early as 1931 H. Strasburger offered as tentative answer to the prevailing negative criticism against Cicero, the possibility that nebulous Roman political concepts are often misunderstood by modern scholarship. His suggestion seems viable if one considers the differences in the degrees of interpretation of political terminology and the use of political slogans such as *res publica* in the late-republic by Cicero's contemporaries as well as by modern critics. Cf. Morgan (1997:27-30) for his view that the term *res publica* in the forties BC was more of a slogan than a meaningful piece of political terminology.

⁹ Cf. for instance, Cicero's severe moral denunciation of both Caesar and Pompeius (*Off.* 2.23, 3.82-85), and his repeated justification of Caesar's murder as tyrannicide in *De officiis* and in his later correspondence with Brutus (in which he looks back on Caesar's dictatorship) as opposed to his view that Caesar's death, whether justified or not, as a political issue could lead to further civil unrest (*Fam.* 12.3.2).

¹⁰ Cicero's correspondence indicates that Caelius must have realised earlier (*Fam.* 8.14 August 50) than Cicero (*Att.* 7.1 October 50) that Caesar and not Pompey was to dominate future Roman politics and that civil war was imminent. Only from 49 BC onwards the reflective tone of Cicero's correspondence crystallises into clear-cut views of the opposing parties and political issues emanating from them. Cicero now seems to have recognised (as Caelius did earlier) Pompey's growing militancy as well as the refusal of the anti-Caesarian optimates to favour a policy of conciliation toward Caesar.

forth by Caesar in his *De bello civili*,¹¹ should indicate the depth of the complexity and variety in Cicero's interpretation and understanding of Roman political trends.

1.2 Titulum

First something needs to be said about the title of this dissertation. The concept 'haruspex' is used in a metaphorical sense to epitomise Cicero's role as a close examiner of the vicissitudes of the *res publica*. Roman *haruspices* (diviners) like their Etruscan counterparts were traditionally renowned for their expertise in the interpretation of prodigies, that is, any reported events which the Romans regarded as 'unnatural'. Such 'unnatural' events were regarded as dangerous warnings and had to be considered by the senate,¹² who then recommended appropriate action (to be taken either by the priests, the magistrates or the people itself) to avert possible danger. This Roman tradition is one of the most clearly Etruscan imports¹³ that may be traced to the regal period. From the second century onwards *haruspices* appear to have enjoyed increasing popularity, probably as a consequence of also fulfilling a mantic function, apart from their traditional role as interpreters of prodigies.¹⁴ We may accept the traditional contrast between the Roman practice of augury (which did not involve predictive elements and was concerned only with ascertaining divine approval), and that of its Greek equivalent μαντική (which was based on foreknowledge of future events). Yet the Romans remained aware of the non-Roman origins of both customs. *Haruspices* were traditionally regarded as not only 'foreign' in the sense of their representing an imported religious skill, but also as very powerful because of the very alienness of this skill.¹⁵ For the purpose of encapsulating the

¹¹ Caesar's description of the civil war and of the conflict between him and Pompey is generally accepted as giving a subjective view of the main protagonists and stands in direct opposition to the moral judgements of Cicero as expounded in *De amicitia* and *De officiis*.

¹² Cic. *Div.* 1.43.

¹³ According to ancient sources *haruspices* originated from Etruria (Cic. *Cat.* 3.8, *Div.* 2.4, Liv. 27.37). Roman prejudice in the second century BC against Etruscan *haruspices* declined after the enfranchisement of Italy and their expertise was eventually incorporated as part of Roman tradition. Cf. Rawson (1985:303).

¹⁴ Apparently the term *haruspex* was sometimes applied to any kind of prophet (Prop. 3.13.59). Appian's allusions, for instance, to various soothsayers as μάντις (BC 2.16.116, 21.149, 152, 153) seem to indicate *haruspices*. Cf. Rawson (1978:142), Wiseman (1994:58). On *disciplina Etrusca* in general see Cristofani (1979:91-103), Rawson (1985:298-306), Aveni and Romano (1994:545-63), Beard (1998:19-21, 102).

¹⁵ The *ars haruspicina* consisted in explaining and interpreting the will of the gods by inspecting the entrails (*exta*) of sacrificial animals. *Haruspices* were therefore sometimes called *extispices* and their skill *extispicium* (Cic. *Div.* 2.12.2, 1.29.5, 2.26.11, 2.42.1).

essence of Cicero's role as observer of the political scene, the term seems to lend itself admirably, for various reasons. During the years 50 to 43 BC Cicero was increasingly placed in a privileged position of 'foreignness': firstly as a 'new man' (something he had always been), but secondly as one having acquired great *expertise* in the almost occult lore of political theorising.¹⁶

Cicero often appears to mention *haruspices* (both known and unidentified) in a political context, especially in relation to forebodings of political disaster.¹⁷ In Cicero's view political foresight involved not only consideration of various possibilities but also sound judgement, and was seen as an important asset of the statesman's wisdom.¹⁸ On his return journey from Cilicia to Rome (on the brink of a civil war) in 49 BC, Cicero requests Atticus to give a prognostic view about the current political situation (*Att.* 7.13.4). Cicero's quotation from Euripides (*fr.* 973) 'μάντις δ' ἄριστος' could be an indication of the high estimate he has of Atticus' ability to form sound political judgements and conjectures. The idea of 'μάντις δ' ἄριστος ὅστις εἰκάζει καλῶς' - the best seer is the one who conjectures well - is mentioned again in Euripides' *Helena* 757, where sound judgement and prudence are regarded as integral aspects of foresight: 'γνώμη δ' ἀρίστη μάντις ἢ τ' εὐβουλία'. Later, in *De divinatione* 2.12-13, Cicero translates the Euripidean quotation 'μάντις δ' ἄριστος' into Latin when he argues against divination (*vide, igitur, ne nulla sit divinatio*), maintaining that: '*bene qui coniciet, vatem hunc perhibebo optimum.*' Here the functions of both *divinatio* and the *vates* are shown to fall outside the realm of politics where the prerequisite for *reasoned conjecture* is the *prudentia* of skilled statesmen. The type of prophet (a rare breed indeed according to Cicero - '*rarum est quoddam genus eorum*') that Cicero has in mind is elucidated in *Div.* 1.111: such a prophet predicts, not through divine inspiration, but through *reason* (*Horum sunt auguria non divini impetus, sed rationis humanae*). Therefore those among them active in public life (*alii autem in re publica exercitati*) are able to foresee the rise of

¹⁶ Cf. discussion of Cicero's letter to A. Caecina (*Fam.* 6.6) in Chapter Ten section two below.

¹⁷ E.g. *Cat.* 3.19: '*haruspices ex tota Etruria convenissent, caedis atque incendia et legum interitum et bellum civile ac domesticum et totius urbis atque imperi occasum appropinquare dixerunt, nisi di immortales omni ratione placati suo numine prope fata ipsa flexissent.*' Cf. *Leg.* 2.31, *Div.* 1.119, 2.53. Plutarch mentions prophecies about civil war in *Sull.* 7.7.

¹⁸ *Att.* 8.11.1, *Off.* 1.81, see below Chapter Seven section three.

tyranny long in advance (*orientem tyrannidem multo ante prospiciunt*). Such men Cicero calls wise men, men who are able to foresee the future (*prudentes, id est providentes*).¹⁹

The term *haruspex* is preferable to *vates* (an inspired prophet-poet), a term more appropriately assigned to the realm of poetry.²⁰ Cicero was cast in the role of a practical analyst tackling Roman problems by employing an external theoretical basis for analysis. Like the traditional *haruspex*, who often in times of crisis inspects the entrails of sacrificial animals, Cicero is seen analysing the internal structure of the metaphorical carcass of the *res publica* which by his time has become in his view that of a sacrificial victim.²¹ Apparently the metaphor of ruined towns as ‘corpses’ was not unfamiliar in Cicero’s time. Sulpicius uses it in March 45 in a letter to Cicero when describing the desolation of the war-ridden towns (*oppidum cadavera*) that he had passed on his return to Rome in 47.²² Cicero, in 63 and 62, uses similar imagery when he alludes to Rome. The city of Rome is seen as the burnt-out ashes of the body politic: ‘*cinere urbis*’ (*Cat.* 2.19.15), ‘*cinere deflagrati imperi*’ (*Cat.* 4.12.20), ‘*cinis patriae*’ (*Sull.* 19.6), which

¹⁹ Cicero’s contemporaries seem to have credited him with the ability to foresee future events: Lentulus Spinther the Younger in May 43 to Cicero: ‘*ut tu divina tua mente prospexisti et praedicasti*’ (*Fam.* 12.14.4) and Nepos *Att.* 16.4.4-6 of Cicero: ‘*futura praedixit, ... ut vates*’. Even Cicero himself seems to have had some awareness of his prognostic powers: cf. *Fam.* 2.16.1, 9.17.1, *Phil.* 2.24. In his letter written in 46 BC (*Fam.* 4.3) to Servius Sulpicius Rufus, whom Cicero regards as ‘a man of almost unique wisdom - *sapientia praeditum prope singulari*’ (3.1.4), ‘*tua prudentia*’ (3.2.3) - Cicero claims to have foreseen as early as 51, as Sulpicius did: ‘*ipse adfui primis temporibus tui consulatus, cum accuratissime monuisti senatum collectis omnibus bellis civilibus*’ (3.1.15), the danger signals of a looming civil war: ‘*multo enim ante tamquam ex aliqua specula prospexi tempestatem futuram, neque id solum mea sponte sed multo etiam magis moriente et denuntiante te*’ (3.1.10).

²⁰ Cicero describes *haruspicium* as a skill (*Div.* 1.72). A *haruspex* is to be distinguished from the inspired poet, the *vates* of Augustan poetry. Cf. Wiseman’s discussion (1994:49-67) about the Augustan appropriation of *vates* to mean inspired prophesying. Whereas Cicero, Plautus, Ennius and even Lucretius (so Wiseman) took *vates* to mean prophet, Varro, in a fashion similar to that of the inter-relationship between poet and prophet in early Greek culture, combined in his use of the term *vates* the concepts of *vates* and *poeta* to denote a ‘divinely inspired poet’. However, as does Homer, who uses the term *mantis* to denote a prophet with expert skills, Cicero distinguishes skilled ‘prophets’ who use reason from *vates* (*Div.* 2.149) who practice inspired prophecy (*vaticinatio*). Note also that Cicero in *Progn.* 73-74 places an even higher premium on the use of *philosophy as a skill* to bring about clarity of mind and conduct than the vatic clarity (as opposed to *vates furenti* line 28, *voces tristificas* line 48) eventually derived from and confirmed by frequent *signis clarisque* (line 31) from Jupiter.

²¹ The latter part of the word *haruspex* contains the root *spec*, whereas the former part, according to Donatus (*Ter. Phorm.* 4.4.28), is derived from *haruga* (victim). Cf. Smith (1875:587), Maltby (1991:270).

²² *Fam.* 4.5.4.



could one day, in Cicero's vision of the future Rome, turn the fatherland into a graveyard: '*sepulta in patria*' (*Cat.* 4.11.14).²³

It is uncertain how seriously Cicero's political outlook was influenced by Etruscan divinatory doctrine. Cicero had close relations with various influential individuals active in Roman public life, who were either closely associated with the tradition of Etruscan lore, or hailed from Etruria. A. Caecina, leader of those Etruscans who opposed Caesar during the civil war in 49, calls himself a client of Cicero and was, according to Cicero, an expert in the *disciplina Etrusca*. He also translated sacred Etruscan books into Latin.²⁴ P. Nigidius Figulus, also a friend of Cicero's, and expert diviner, who wrote a book on the reading of *exta* and who repeatedly predicted the death of Caesar,²⁵ died in exile in 45. The Volusii were closely associated with Cicero,²⁶ and the *haruspex* Spurinna was a friend of Cicero's.²⁷

Haruspices were often consulted by leading political figures on non-official occasions. Sulla, for instance, had a personal *haruspex*,²⁸ so had Pompeius,²⁹ and C. Gracchus' friend Herennius Siculus acted as a *haruspex*. Clearly the *disciplina Etrusca* dealt with far more than just the examination and interpretation of entrails at public occasions.³⁰

²³ Cicero often uses *incendium* as a metaphor for political ruin. Cf. *Att.* 4.6.1-2 where Cicero alludes to Rome as a furnace (*incendio*), a place of living hell from which the deceased Flamen Martialis, L. Lentulus Niger has been wrought, but which Cicero has to endure (*nos vero ferrei*). Cicero depicts Rome, a city in the process of political ruin, as the remaining ashes of the corpse politic which fell victim to the ambitions of powerful men. These ashes of a Rome offered in sacrifice, become the ashes of a ruined empire (*Cat.* 2.19.15, 4.12.20), and eventually the ashes of a burnt-out empire, that is, the fatherland (*Sull.* 19.16).

²⁴ *Fam.* 6.6, 6.7.4.

²⁵ *Lyd. Ost.* 45, *Gell. NA* 16.6.12.

²⁶ *Verr.* 2.2.27, *Att.* 5.11.4, *Fam.* 5.20.4.

²⁷ *Fam.* 9.24.2. According to Cicero certain prophecies relating to the future of Caesar were made by the *haruspex* Spurinna. These Cicero recorded and inserted in the *De divinatione* (1.119) a few weeks after Caesar's death. Allegedly, on inspection it was found that the bull which Caesar had sacrificed during the Lupercalia had no heart. Spurinna apparently interpreted this as an unfavourable omen and warned Caesar that his policies (according to Weinstock 1971:345 this probably included the offering of the diadem) and his life were in danger. The next day's inspection revealed that the *caput* of the victim's liver was missing. This indicated impending disaster (if the *caput* was mutilated, '*caput caesum*', it usually signalled profound change). For the significance of the *caput extorum* cf. *Cic. Div.* 2.12, *Liv.* 8.9, 27.26, Smith (1875:240), Rawson (1978:145).

²⁸ *Plut. Sull.* 9.3.

²⁹ *Cic. Div.* 2.53.

³⁰ Cf. Lenaghan (1969:32-37). Etruscan doctrine also included the *libri fatales* regarding the destiny of the state and the *libri exercitiales* possibly on military matters.

Although Cicero never refers directly to himself as ‘*haruspex*’, then, the term has proved convenient for the purposes of this study.

1.3 Dispositio

After the usual *Stand der Forschung* in Chapter Two, Chapter Three gives a brief historical overview highlighting the impact of revolutionaries on Roman politics from the second century onwards. This facilitates contextualisation of further analysis of Cicero’s political thinking. It is followed by a discussion of sources (Chapter Four) concentrating on Cicero’s writings as primary source. These primary writings bear contrast with Caesar’s *Commentarii*, the only other extant contemporary narrative of the era.

In order to refine our understanding of the manner in which Cicero might have arrived at some of his political and philosophical views, it is necessary to examine Cicero’s philosophical background. A useful point of departure has proved to be a close look at Cicero’s contact with the school of the Sceptic Academy, to which he had been devoted since his student days. Chapter Five therefore offers a brief overview of early Roman political activity and the considerable influence of the Greek philosophical tradition thereon. This serves as introduction to a discussion of Cicero’s philosophical method, an innovative Roman attempt to integrate Greek scientific philosophical theory with traditional Roman political practices and thinking. The influence of the leading Sceptic school, the New Academy, to which Cicero consistently claims adherence, is clearly visible in his deliberate suspension of judgement, laying out both sides of a question without attempting to reach final conclusions.

Chapter Six focuses on the influence of Greek theory on Cicero, particularly the cyclical thought of Polybius, the first historiographer to apply Greek political theory to describe the complicated process of Rome’s rise to its dominant position (Polyb. 6.3.1-4). One detects, despite the traces of Polybian thought to be found in Cicero’s most overtly political work *De republica*, elements of other sources besides Polybius (Plato and his successors Aristotle and Theophrastus, for instance). Ideas prevalent among early Roman

writers such as Ennius, Accius, and Cato that are present in Cicero's writing cannot be ignored. His adaptation of these ideas reflects the underlying cultural conflicts between Greek and Roman thought. Traditional Roman practice needed to be reconciled with Greek philosophical theory, and this was done by Cicero when he set out to Romanise Greek philosophy (Chapter Seven). There it becomes clear that Cicero's solution, his view of an ideal Roman state, indeed has a ring of originality, a claim implicitly made by Cicero himself in *De republica*: '*ratio ad disputandum nova, quae nusquam est in Graecorum libris*' (*Rep.* 2.21).

Chapter Eight focuses in particular on the period of Cicero's governorship in Cilicia, when he found himself removed from the centre of Roman politics. This chapter intends to show that distance has served to sharpen Cicero's perceptions, forcing him to direct his attention to the power struggle between Caesar and Pompeius. Here he resembles the *haruspex*, dissecting and observing, but not directing. The correspondence between Cicero and Caelius Rufus, who plays the role of informant and becomes a sounding board for Cicero's judgement of reported events, provides important insight into the development of Cicero's political thought. It also shows Cicero's willingness to entertain the insights and perceptions of others, beside his own.

Chapter Nine considers Cicero's evaluation of both Caesar and Pompeius. In the section on Pompeius the contradiction between Cicero's public utterances about both generals, and his thoughts about them in his correspondence and theoretical treatises will be delineated to provide a clearer picture of the apparent progression of his thought patterns. Cicero's appraisal of Pompeius will be seen occasionally not to be free from political and personal prejudices. By contrast Cicero's overall perception and representation of Caesar appears more consistent, though not less free from subjectivity. The chapter heading '*Voces tristificas*', recalls a line from Cicero's poem on his consulship *De consulatu suo* (2. fr. 48) as it provides a view of the *res publica* and Caesar's role therein that indicates a close resemblance between the last years of the republic and the time of the Catilinarian conspiracy and the eventful years following it.

Despite the intense personal loss and awareness of political debilitation that Cicero experienced during 45, Cicero's philosophical output from his last years indicates

incessant political theorising. Chapters Ten and Eleven will emphasise that Cicero's return to philosophy had a definite purpose, although he was unable actively to prevent the final inevitable demise of the political process as he had known it.

2. Overview of scholarship

2.1 General and biographical studies

Scholarship on Cicero and the late Roman Republic in general is extensive. The scholarship of the last forty years (as previously) tends to concentrate on Cicero's rhetorical skill, discussion of his speeches and his merit as politician. Cicero's involvement with Roman politics (together with the much discussed subject of his personal idiosyncrasies), still predominates in scholarly discourse. However, Ciceronian scholarship seldom manages to approach Cicero dispassionately. The general trend evident in scholarly debate is one of either rebuttal or affirmation of the hostile criticism of the nineteenth century led by Drumann and Mommsen. Though now lacking the intensity of the early twentieth century debate on Cicero, his virtues, vices and political accomplishments,¹ the arguments of both pro- and anti-Ciceronian advocates of the second half of the twentieth century vigorously contributed toward a more comprehensive synthesis. This relates particularly to awareness of the personal and political pressures that played a major role in Cicero's political behaviour, and the influence of these on his political thinking.

Scholarship since the late sixties shows an increasing consideration of Cicero as a politician. Emphasis is on Cicero's life and works placed within the social and political circumstances of the late Roman republic. Douglas (1968) displays Cicero as being a largely conventional politician and pictures him in his political behaviour as 'a politician of all times ... necessarily ambitious, often subtle and devious, sometimes ruthless, sometimes compelled to turn his sails to the gales which blew' (9). Douglas gives a realistic and humane view of Cicero as a typical example of the 'eternal politician' (5) in contrast to Thompson (1962) who, in his lengthy article on Cicero, displays no great admiration for Cicero as politician, and also Balsdon (1964), who shows appreciation for Cicero as person, but not as politician, and Smith (1966), who appears virtually oblivious of all nineteenth century criticism of the man.

¹ A more sympathetic approach to Cicero the man in response to the general German derogation of his reputation, his personality and political behaviour is evident in the work of Boissier (1865), Strachan-Davidson (1894), Heinze (1909) and Petersson (1920). Zielinski (1912:354)³ heaves all subtlety overboard by calling Drumann's work (his almost vindictive exposition of Cicero's career) 'eine muffige Rumpelkammer, aus der mann sich mit verhaltenem Atem seinem Bedarf holt.'

In this decade the work of Douglas, together with the compilations of Ferguson (1962) and Dorey (1964) as well as the republishing of Gelzer's extensive RE lemma *Ein Biographischer Versuch* (1969), a masterly assessment of mainly Cicero's rhetorical and political writing and achievements, represents a more balanced view of Cicero within the wider confines of Roman politics, religion and philosophy.

Numerous biographies, following this more balanced biographical approach to Cicero, appeared in the seventies, but still tended to focus on the person of Cicero and his political career. Stockton (1971) stresses Cicero's political conduct in the sixties and shows critical appreciation for his republican stand against Antonius, heir to Caesar's tyranny, but neglects any in depth consideration of Cicero's political ideas as formulated in *De republica* as well as his views on tyranny in *De officiis*. Shackleton Bailey (1971) draws his picture of Cicero predominantly from extracts from his own translations of Cicero's correspondence, from which, in the absence of detailed background discussion of Ciceronian politics and society, Cicero emerges as a political figure who was 'no political genius, either abstract or pragmatic'.² Stockton and Shackleton Bailey both tend to be critical of Cicero's emotional side (Shackleton Bailey less so by letting Cicero speak for himself), and focus particularly on the political aspects of his life, as do Elizabeth Rawson, who also pays attention to Cicero's ideas (1975), and Lacey (1978), both with more sympathetic approaches.

The close of the decade of the seventies witnessed Mitchell's *Cicero, the ascending years* (1979), a study of Cicero's political life and thought. In the sequel to this biography, Mitchell set a new standard with *Cicero, the senior statesman* (1991), by drawing on the entire corpus of Cicero's writings in the construction of his portrait of Cicero. Mitchell's approach in *Cicero, the senior statesman* differs from most standard biographies in that it stresses Cicero's political role within the framework of a detailed examination of Roman political history of the years 62 to 43 BC, rather than focusing prominently on the man alone. Mitchell devotes a large part of this study to the era immediately after Cicero's consulship, when he still felt that he had the potential for an active political role.

² Shackleton Bailey (1971: intro. x).

The era in which Cicero's potential for power-mongering and manipulation was virtually eclipsed appears to hold less interest for biographers. Mitchell's chapter on Cicero's proconsulship in Cilicia (51 - 50 BC) is an exception. It offers the most comprehensive and detailed analysis of a period in Cicero's life otherwise virtually neglected by other historians and commentators (since those of Tyrrell and Purser 1890, and, more recently, Stockton 1971, Shackleton Bailey 1971 and Fuhrmann 1990). Mitchell succeeded in his purpose (stated in his preface vii) to provide a detailed and fully documented account of Cicero's political life that combines the story of his career with a comprehensive discussion of the political ideas and events that helped shape it.

In contrast to Mitchell's challenging interpretation of traditional historical events, the biographies by his predecessors, Habicht (1990) and Fuhrmann (1990), both seem to revert to the familiar pro- or anti-Ciceronian sentiments of earlier scholarship. Habicht covers well-trodden ground in his very positive portrayal of Cicero as a politician, an effort apparently very much in response to an earlier negative judgement expounded by Meier (1968:111), to wit, that Cicero was no politician. Fuhrmann, on the other hand, states in the preface (vii) of his biography on Cicero, that it is written for a readership with no extensive previous knowledge of Cicero's life. He seems to be suggesting that the general trend of his assessment of Cicero, as a politician, will be a matter of judging his shortcomings as a politician which have so often been deprecated. In spite of Fuhrmann's negative regard for Cicero the politician, his general picture of Cicero as orator and philosophical writer is positive.³ The main focus of this biography remains on Cicero the man and not Cicero the politician. Fuhrmann concludes that Cicero had achieved the status of 'a founding father of Europe through a humane culture that endeavoured to combine philosophical training with competence in the use of words as a public medium'.⁴

The most recent biography of Cicero appeared in 1994 from the pen of T. Wiedemann, who guides the reader through the delicate and complicated nuances of the politics of the

³ Fuhrmann regards Cicero as 'one of the most versatile, elegant and humane philosophical authors of the ancient world' (20). Cf. the discussion by Dobesch (1993) of Fuhrmann's biography of Cicero as 'souveräne, humanistische Lebensbild' and complementary to Habicht's presentation of *Cicero, the politician* as 'eine neu gesehene positive Komponente, die man nicht mehr beiseite schieben können wird.'

⁴ Cf. Zielinski (1912)³ for a history of Cicero's fame through the ages.

late Roman republic, stressing not only the significance of rhetoric in Cicero's life, but also its wider role in Roman republican politics. This work constitutes a good introduction to Cicero's life and thought. It seems to follow a trend set by Wood (1988) who examined Cicero's social and political thought as a unit. Both these works recognise the intricacy and complexity of the political scene of this era.

Wood, in his preface, presents his impressive study of Cicero as a serious social and political theorist as 'the first of its kind in English' and concentrates on Cicero as abstract theorist, stressing the importance of Cicero's views on subjects such as society and politics, the role of private property in Roman society, violence in politics, civil resistance to tyranny and the practical art of politics as revealed in Cicero's correspondence. Wood insists that Cicero was the first ancient thinker to anticipate many of the topics of modern political thought. For instance, Cicero distinguishes the state from society (Hobbes) and stresses the state's function in the protection of private property (Locke).⁵ Wood reveals Cicero as a political realist similar to Machiavelli, with whom Cicero is often starkly contrasted by other commentators.⁶

The Cicero characterised in Wood's tenth chapter 'The art of politics', as a 'hard-headed realist, well versed in the pitfalls of power, the complexities of manipulation, and the uses of violence' (176-7), is a challenge to the conventional scholarly presentation of Cicero as a political moraliser - someone who turned to political theory to provide solace to members of the ruling class in remembrance of a more stable past characterised by consensus and harmony among the elite.

The perception of Cicero as a political realist is not new. Without explicitly stating it, Gottlieb (1982) indirectly contributed to this less familiar picture of Cicero as a political

⁵ Similarly, Morrall (1982) emphasises Cicero's pragmatic approach to Roman politics in Cicero's linking of political authority with property evident in his definition of *respublica* as the property of a people (*Rep.* 1.15, 16), thus recalling the past, when Rome's power rested on free property owners. Morrall considers Cicero's distinction between public and private property, together with its corollary, separate spheres of public and private interests and duties, as the beginning of the modern antithesis of individual and State.

⁶ Cf. Hancock's discussion (1994) of the contrasting positions of Cicero in *De officiis* and Machiavelli in *The Prince*, on the question of whether political leaders may with some justification make decisions that conflict with personal conscience and customary morality. Cicero argues that political decisions ought never to compromise what is right, whereas Machiavelli appears to regard Cicero's views as naive.

realist. Gottlieb, in his examination of the tensions that existed between ethical and political norms on the one hand, and political reality on the other hand, evident in the pretence and practical conduct of late republican affairs, stresses Cicero's view that the increasing authority of powerful men such as Pompeius and Caesar endangered the authority of the senate, and in doing so became the new binding factors of a new political solidarity. This view, expressed by Cicero since the sixties BC, was substantiated over time in the outcome of the political situation when the Roman concepts of *auctoritas* and political solidarity (previously marked by the Ciceronian concepts of *consensus omnium bonorum* and *concordia ordinum*) had evidently changed in favour of the victors of the civil war.

2.2 Cicero as political philosopher

Cicero's philosophical essay *De republica* (the *locus classicus* of his political ideas) recently received renewed scholarly attention among both classicists and political scientists interested in the mixed content of Plato, Aristotle, later Hellenistic philosophy and political theorising found in *De republica*. Grant (1993), in his introduction to *Cicero: On government* refers to Cicero as 'by far Rome's most enlightening political thinker'. Zetzel (1999) views Cicero as a 'Roman Plato' (intro. x) whose *De republica* could be regarded as the first 'serious attempt by a Roman to analyse the structure and values of republican government and imperial rule' (intro. xvii). Powell (1990) is hesitant to discern a definite practical aim behind the composition of *De republica*, but concedes that the work could provide 'an effective contrast to the reality' (121) of contemporary Roman political circumstances.

In *De republica* there is much Greek philosophical and theoretical influence to be detected. One of the main features in *De republica* is Cicero's concern with not only the degeneration of regimes and its manifestations, but also with the stabilisation of the process of regeneration somewhat along Polybian lines. What Cicero has to say about the origins and purpose of a political community evidently has Polybius as model. Hahn (1995) suggests that Polybius' prototypical example of the theory of historical recurrence should not be interpreted, as some critics do, in terms of two different patterns of

constitutional change,⁷ but rather as two versions of the same cycle: the first a brief outline, the second a longer survey. In Hahm's opinion, Polybius' theory is based on the assumption that social organisation and change depend on the behaviour of its constituent members, and that their behaviour in turn depends on natural patterns rooted in their human nature. According to Hahm, Polybius contends that his principles can be used for anticipating the consequences of political decisions.

The belief that human societies were destined to an inevitable cyclic process of growth and decay is consistent with the ancient classical thought of, for instance, Plato and his search for and presentation of a best regime. According to Nicgorski (1991) Cicero's *De republica* differs from Plato's model of a best regime (an imaginary city, portrayed as more to be wished for than to be hoped for)⁸ in the sense that it is a depiction of what is taken as the best of actually realised regimes, that of the Roman republic.⁹ Whereas Plato's model was not portrayed as practicable, Cicero shapes a practicable model, that of the model statesman (*rector* and *gubernator*) who could modify the process of degeneration to some extent through his prudence and a will to pursue the political good by both his counsel and his deeds. In contrast to the philosopher-king in Plato's model, Cicero presents a more attainable human model, that of the statesman who represents the primary means of attaining a best regime. This interpretation by Nicgorski of Cicero's ideal statesman challenges the traditional scholarly view of Cicero's model statesman as an idealistic, superlatively virtuous individual who has the power to act.¹⁰ Powell (1994) goes even further and argues that Cicero's concept of the '*rector rei publicae*' is intended as a professional term to describe a politician as such, one who practices politics as a professional occupation.

⁷ First, a three-station biological cycle of growth, acme, and decline, and second, a seven-station fixed sequence of constitutions.

⁸ *Rep.* 2.52.

⁹ Nicgorski (1993) draws attention to Cicero's *De inventione*, where Cicero describes a community in which some persuade others toward what they have discovered through reason, namely the keeping of trust and the maintenance of justice. The *res publica* is described as a bonding of a large number of citizens through agreement on what is right and on community of interest (*Rep.* 1.39).

¹⁰ For the traditional view on Cicero's model statesman see E. Rawson (1975b:151-3), Wood (1988:177-79).

Ferrary (1995) elaborates on Cicero's idea of the model statesman as a man of political prudence (*prudencia civilis*),¹¹ a leader whose function it is to know what changes may affect a regime and to detect, prevent or guide the outcome of political change.¹² According to Cicero (*Rep.* 2.69), the model statesman should offer himself as a mirror to his fellow citizens and should not cease from self-examination, so that his fellow citizens can recognise the divine element (which is the true self of every man) in the brilliance of this image that is urging them to imitate him. It seems that constitutions, without the intervention of the model statesman, do not achieve the ideal, that of a mixed constitution, but remain caught up in different evolutionary processes that lead to one form of tyranny or another.¹³

2.3 Practical politics

Mitchell (1984) examines the general Roman view that problems of the late Roman republic and its consequent decline were due to a moral decline rooted in the affluence and luxury that followed Rome's victories on the battlefield. He stresses the striking difference between modern analyses and the perceptions held in antiquity about the possible causes of the decline of the Roman republic. Whereas few modern historians would accept the subject of moral decay as a principal cause of decline, those who lived during the late Roman republican era viewed its problems almost exclusively in ethical terms.¹⁴ Cicero for instance repeatedly decries the surrender of Roman statesmen to

¹¹ The man of prudence (*prudens*) in *De republica* should not be confused with the perfect Stoic sage. Cicero's model statesman is open to constant self-searching and self-improvement, urging others to imitate him (*Rep.* 2.67-69).

¹² Ben Jonson (*Catiline* 1611) described Cicero as a 'Consul, / Whose vertue, counsell, watchfullnesse, and wisdom / Hath free'd the common-wealth' (5.304-6). The identity of the *rector rei publicae* however, remains a controversial issue in modern scholarship. Popular solutions vary from Pompeius, Cicero himself, or an impersonal political lay figure. Although *De republica* contains allusions to and reflections on contemporary political matters at the time of its composition (cf. Geiger 1984), Cicero's *idea* of the *ideal* or *model* statesman is consistent with the abstract nature of his political theorising in the essay. The *model*, as a particular political figure, existed neither in Scipio's time '[quem] iamdudum quaero et ad quem cupio pervenire' nor in Cicero's own time (*Rep.* 2.67).

¹³ In this regard Cicero appears to follow the Peripatetic tradition of Aristotelian critique of Plato. Aristotle too recognised the need to detect revolutionary threats to constitutions. Unlike Plato (book eight) Cicero does not seem to believe in a fixed cycle of constitutional forms (Ferrary 1995:54). His conceptions of degenerate forms of constitutions cannot with certainty be traced to a specific source, but he appears to have knowledge of the popular Aristotelian work of Theophrastus on the subject, as mentioned in *Fin.* 5.11. Cf. Barnes (1997) on Cicero's possible acquaintance with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, his *Topics* and *Ethics*.

¹⁴ It is not my intention here to differentiate in any detail between the distinct genres of ancient and modern historiography. Cf. Schneider (1995).

luxuria. According to Mitchell, the most destructive consequence of moral decay, for Cicero, lay in the activities of the *populares* as a socially and politically disruptive force.

Cicero's portrayal and condemnation of the *populares* and their following is excellently discussed by Wood (1986) with reference to the speech *Pro Sestio* (Cicero's vitriolic attack upon the *populares*) in which he stigmatises *populares* as immoral, irrational and reckless perpetrators of violence against the republic, with their ultimate goal that of overthrowing the government. For Wood the struggle between *optimates* and *populares* is fundamentally a struggle between the propertied and the landless.

In her book on Roman politics in the age of Caesar, Lily Ross Taylor (1949:8-24) warns that the terms *populares* and *optimates* should not be confused with modern political parties, but that they were loose alignments of the landed aristocracy and their clients and supporters. In spite of Seager's comprehensive article (1972) on the principal functions and connotations of the word *popularis* in Cicero (where he indicates that the plural form *populares* in Cicero's writing always refers to a series of individuals and not to a group), the notion of a 'popular party' (as for instance in Stockton 1971:33, Morrell 1982:36, Mandell 1983-84, Epstein 1987:100ff.) still perseveres. Veyne (1992:204-5) rightly gives a concise description of both *optimates* and *populares* as rich oligarchs. He stresses the accepted interpretation that the name *populares* was given to statesmen who appealed to the popular assembly against the senate.¹⁵

Brunt, in *The fall of the Roman Republic and related essays* (1988), disposes of many of the modern stereotypical perceptions about Roman institutions such as clientship, factions and friendship. His discussion of *clientela* indicates that Roman political decision-making was not a straightforward and predictable process. Individuals had various clientship relations which had to be re-evaluated and weighed against one another in times of political uncertainty. In his seventh chapter, in contrast to some scholars who would see *amicitia* as mainly political (Hellegouarc'h 1963, Habinek 1990), Brunt highlights the social, economic, psychological and political dimensions of *amicitia* by emphasising that

¹⁵ An easier definition is to be found by interpreting the difference between the two groupings as merely a difference in approach to the existing structural framework of the Roman political system. *Optimates* relied most on carrying the senate with them, whereas *populares* worked through the various people's assemblies and /or the tribunate.

amicitia can certainly denote affection, and that though it entails *officia*, it is more than a relationship requiring the interchange of services, or just a mechanism for distribution of power among the Roman aristocracy.

Wistrand (1979) and Mitchell (1991: ch. 1) also offer useful discussions of Roman concepts central to the understanding of Cicero's political thought, as does Millar (1995) in his discussion of the sovereignty of the *populus Romanus* as contributing factor in the emergence of a monarchy in Roman politics. Millar shows that the Roman system with its law courts and popular assemblies, preceded by *contiones*, favoured the position of the demagogue. This important relation between the 'one' and the 'many' is illustrated by Walbank (1995) in his discussion of Polybius' expressed dislike of the populace and his emphasis on the substantial powers of the people. Similar negative sentiments appear to be present in the speeches of Cicero when he mentions the Gracchi (Murray 1966, Veyne 1992, Robinson 1994), probably because he believed (*Rep.* 1.31) that late republican ills stemmed from the conflict set in motion by Gracchan popular politics (Wood 1988), a view consistent with the general views of for instance Badian (1972), Syme (1982) and Brunt (1988), who see the effect of the struggles around the Gracchi as part of a 'Roman revolution'. Occasionally positive portrayal of the *popularis* Marius (Carney 1960, 1967, Mitchell 1979:45-51) and the Gracchi, as popular heroic *exempla*, seems to be a matter of political expediency for Cicero. As Petersson (1920:232) and Mack (1967) have shown, Cicero usually does so while addressing the urban populace.

2.4 Key concepts

According to Nicgorski (1984), for Cicero the basis of all philosophy is to be found in the distinction between good and evil (*Div.* 2.2). He asserts that this practical perspective is the key to Cicero's political thought, giving it a coherency that Nicgorski calls Cicero's 'idea of utility' where utility (*utilitas*) cannot be separated from what is right (*honestas et ius*).

Atkins (1990) argues that Cicero's concept of justice in *De officiis* is the most important of the four primary virtues and that it helps to define the other virtues, which must be limited by it. Atkins is of the opinion that Cicero's theoretical account of justice contains the earliest extant theory of justice that explicitly defines justice as that which builds up a

society. This view rightly dismisses much of earlier scholarly perception of Cicero as mere transcriber of Greek philosophy and contributes to the recent generally more accepted view that supports Cicero's claims in the prologues to *De finibus* and *De officiis* that he is not merely translating Greek philosophy, but presenting certain aspects of Greek philosophy in his own, Roman way. Acknowledgement and acceptance of Cicero's claim to independence as philosopher is evident in the recent revival of discussion on Cicero and philosophy that appeared in a number of collections of essays on Greek and Roman philosophy (Griffin 1989, 1997, Fortenbaugh and Steinmetz 1989, Powell 1995). These studies elaborate on earlier positive views by Hunt (1954) and Ferguson (1962) that emphasised Cicero's analytical approach (for instance his discussion of the cardinal virtues in *Tusculans*) and his insistence on definition and analysis as his contribution to philosophy.

2.5 Cicero's views on tyrannicide

Cicero's insistence that justice may require one to act positively to assist the *res publica* facilitates the suggestion of the killing of a tyrant as a duty (*Off.* 3.32). In this Cicero follows the Greek philosophical tradition that advocates and glorifies tyrannicide, as for example in the tradition of Platonism as a proud commitment to promotion of constitutional reform by whatever means necessary, a notion also supported by Aristotle (*Pol.* 2.7.13.1267a) and Polybius (2.56.15).¹⁶ Roman aversion to the *tyrannus* (Dunkle 1971, Kennell 1997) was more intense than the Greek aversion to the τύραννος as an un- or extra-constitutional ruler turned bad (Cartledge 1997), in the sense that the concept *tyrannus*, especially in the Ciceronian era (as Büchner 1952 indicates), appears to have lost its constitutional relevance and came to signify any ruler in the *res publica* who strives towards *dominatio*.

Cicero's justification of tyrannicide is in stark contrast to the Stoic stance. It suggests a tension between Cicero as student of Plato and Aristotle, on the one hand, and Cicero as pragmatic statesman, on the other. Scholars tend to focus on Cicero in terms of a seemingly dual allegiance to the philosophical schools of Academic scepticism (Niegorski 1984) and Stoicism. Colish (1985) discussing Stoicism, warns that the reader must be aware of a hidden political and personal agenda underlying most of Cicero's

¹⁶ Sedley (1997).

philosophical works, which often create obstacles to appreciation of him as a moral and political philosopher.

2.6 Manner and style

A number of scholars regard Cicero as a self-proclaimed follower of the sceptic school of the New Academy. Wood (1988), Barié (1994), Hankinson (1995) and Schmidt (1995) specifically examine Cicero's philosophical practice of presenting everything in the form of a debate offering both sides of an argument, and thereby giving shape to a nuanced conclusion that may be either valid or nearest in approximation to what may be deemed acceptable. This philosophical practice is evident in Cicero's letters where he uses the Socratic method of weighing arguments on either side and finally adopts what is plausible. Leonhardt (1995) suggests that in coupling seemingly contradictory and traditionally non-philosophical terms such as *honestum* and *utile*, Cicero, through a process of deliberation, shapes a new philosophical connection or relationship between these concepts. Leonhardt concludes that a close parallel between Cicero's practical conduct as a politician and his philosophical method (similar to the method followed in *De officiis*) is evident in his correspondence of 49 BC, especially from the period after Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, when Cicero seemed undecided about whether openly to join the Pompeian side.

Cicero's correspondence has recently received attention in the stylistic and linguistic analyses of Jäger (1986) and Hutchinson (1993). In a later work, Hutchinson (1998) has shown that the incidence of Cicero's Greek in the letters, mainly seen as an artistic device, is much more frequent than in his 'published' works. Whereas previous studies of Cicero's epistolary Greek (Steele 1900, Rose 1921) have been largely atomistic, recent approaches tend to focus on linguistic issues. For instance, Dunkel (2000) sees the high frequency of code-switching in the letters to Atticus as typical of Cicero's conversational *persona*. Baldwin (1992) concentrates on the deployment of Greek in the collection *Ad familiares* and discerns some political nuances in Cicero's choice of Greek quotations.

Commentaries on Cicero's correspondence abound. Most outstanding since the monumental commentary of Tyrrell and Purser (1897) are the even more monumental contributions of Shackleton Bailey in his chronological arrangement of the letters *Ad*

Atticum (1965-70), *Ad familiares* (1977), *Ad Quintum fratrem et M. Brutum* (1980), together with his Penguin translations *Cicero's letters to Atticus* and *Cicero's letters to his friends* (1978, corrected edition 1988). In the most recent commentary on Cicero's letters, Willcock (1995) provides useful and accurate supplementary information on individual passages in the letters of *Ad familiares* and *Ad Brutum* from January to April 43 BC. These commentaries unfortunately omit any detailed consideration of Cicero's political and philosophical thought.

In contrast to Shackleton Bailey's commentaries, with their emphasis on style, politics, biography but their scant regard for philosophical passages, Kumaniecki (1967) uses the correspondence to indicate the relation between Cicero's philosophical works and the practical problems that confronted Cicero at the time of his writing.

2.7 On the correspondence

Whereas in the past discussion of Cicero's correspondence centred typically around the circumstances and publication of the letters (Peter 1879, Carcopino 1951, Phillips 1986), biographies based on the letters (Boissier 1903, Sihler 1933, Shackleton Bailey 1971, Mitchell 1979), political-historical works, for instance, on the relationship between Cicero and Caesar (Lossmann 1962), Roman political friendship based mainly on political expediency as exemplified in the relationship between Cicero and Pompeius (B. Rawson 1978), and Cicero's views and conduct during the civil war (Wistrand 1979, Brunt 1986), recent discussion of the letters shows increasing interest in Cicero's political and philosophical thought.

Hariman (1989), for instance, offers the letters to Atticus as 'a literature of political thought' (145). He sees the letters as Cicero's effort to create his own republican *persona* as the embodiment of the political culture of the Roman republic, thereby designing what Hariman calls a 'republican style', to maximise the political opportunities inherent in republican government. Dettenhofer (1990), slightly more persuasively, suggests that the philosophical allusions in the letters, a year before Caesar's murder, between Cicero and C. Cassius Longinus (leader of the assassination plot on Caesar), actually offered a safe substitute for political discussion in times of peril. Griffin's study (1995) sets Cicero's occupation with philosophy into the larger context of his interactions with educated

contemporaries to determine the extent, nature and depth of philosophical interest and knowledge at Rome.

These recent reassessments of Cicero's political thought and his occupation with philosophy shed new light on Cicero's own perspectives and agendas in his political and philosophical writings, but also show that there is still no general agreement on the nature and intent of his political and philosophical thought.

In order to contextualise an analysis of Cicero's political thinking, the next chapter will provide a brief historical overview, concentrating on the impact of revolutionaries in Roman politics from the second century onwards.

3. Historical overview

Impact of revolutionaries in Roman politics

As has been noted above, Cicero is both object of this study and the main source for elucidation of his own background. Given the frequent references to the past in his oeuvre, together with his rhetorical training, it is clear that the political history of the preceding century was to a lesser or greater extent familiar to Cicero. Therefore a brief overview of events from the second century onwards will be given below, as a means of setting the scene, and placing Cicero's observations into historical context.

It has become a common trend among both modern historians and classicists to regard the Gracchan period with its attendant and unprecedented intensity of political unrest as the 'beginning' of the Roman 'revolution'.¹ This view is consistent with the perceptions of Appian, Plutarch,² and especially Cicero himself,³ all of whom appear to have regarded this period of increasing political strife that eventually culminated in civil war, as a significant turning-point in Roman politics, even as a catalyst for the end of the Roman republic.

The use of the term 'revolution' within the context of the Roman political events of the second century BC tends to obscure its precedents. Precedents for change ranged from, on the one hand, political factors such as the violent abuse of tribunician power by individuals, and strong competition for popular appeal among a populace that was becoming accustomed to expressing its political wishes through demonstration, to, on the other hand, socio-economic factors such as the dispossession of peasants and

¹ Syme (1939), Earl (1963), Badian (1972), Stockton (1978), Ridley (1981), Horvath (1994).

² Appian *BC* 1.2: 'No sword was ever brought into the assembly ... until Tiberius Gracchus, while holding office as tribune in the act of proposing legislation, became the first man to die in civil unrest. The disturbances did not end with this foul act ...' Plut. *TG* 20: 'This is said to have been the first outbreak of civil strife in Rome, which ended in bloodshed since the expulsion of the kings'. Cf. Vell. 2.3.3.

³ Cic. *Inv.* 1.91: '*quodsi non P. Scipio Corneliam filiam Ti. Graccho conlocasset atque ex ea duos Gracchos procreasset, tantae seditiones natae non essent*', *Rep.* 1.31.2: '*Nam, ut videtis, mors Tiberii Gracchi et iam ante tota illius ratio tribunatus divisit populum unum in duas partis*'.

depopulation of the land.⁴ It can, however, not be denied that major revolutionary changes took place during the second century BC. These changes were, however, not primarily restricted within the framework of Gracchan political issues, but were part of a major evolutionary process that signified their discontinuity as a break with the past.⁵ The outcome of this evolutionary process was that the established nobility had lost out in their competition with individuals of great wealth, power and ambition, and was gradually disintegrating, only to be replaced by a series of one-man rulers.

From the late second century onward a pattern emerged in Roman politics whereby unwritten constitutional conventions could be overridden when immediate expediency in times of crisis demanded it. This pattern became a familiar feature of Roman politics especially under the prominence of the Scipios, commencing in 210 BC with the appointment (through special legislation) of Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (the Elder) to a command in Spain, for the first time granting him as *privatus* the *imperium* of a proconsul. In 205 BC Scipio assumed the consulship, becoming *princeps senatus* in 199 BC and consul for a second time in 194 BC. His success, however, brought him competing enemies among the nobility, and despite his popular support, he was accused of ignoring the senate, acting the role of *dictator*⁶ and striving towards *regnum*.⁷

Again in 190 BC the senate found itself obliged to bypass legislation that prohibited the re-election of recent consuls. Having elected the brother of Scipio Africanus, Lucius, to the consulate, the senate appointed Scipio Africanus as his legate to secure a Roman victory over Antiochus. As a result of the unsuccessful efforts of the consuls to end the final war against Carthage, popular demand forced the senate once again in 147 BC to suspend this restriction in favour of another Scipio, who, although legally ineligible for the consulate, had a remarkable military record.⁸ Mass emotion and popular outcry had by

⁴ Horvath (1994:87-116) has successfully shown that the traditional interpretation that claims that the process of the dispossession of the Italian peasantry resulted in a disgruntled uncontrollable peasantry and that it created a manpower shortage in Italy which weakened the basis of Roman power, is grossly overstated and no longer tenable.

⁵ Cf. Gruen's interpretation (1974) of continuity as keynote of the late Republic.

⁶ Liv. 38.51.1-4.

⁷ Liv. 38.54.1, 6.

⁸ According to Appian *Lib.* 112 Scipio Aemilianus 'was a candidate for the aedileship (for the laws did not yet permit him to be consul on account of his age), yet the people elected him consul. This was illegal'. The populace, however, was adamant and became 'vehement and

now become effective political weapons as a means of opposition to the senate and resulted in the appointment of Scipio Aemilianus as consul.⁹

The year 135 BC witnessed a repeat of these, by now rather familiar, populist tactics, when the law that prohibited second consulships was rescinded and Scipio Aemilianus for a second time was elected consul and given a military command against Numantia (134 BC). Once more constitutional restrictions yielded to what appeared to be urgent necessity.

Under the influence of the leading nobility, the mid-second century BC experienced a transformation in its jurisprudence to accommodate the proliferation of new legal relations that came into existence as a consequence of the rapid economic expansion of Roman Italy.¹⁰ This transformation, guided by M. Manlius (*cos.* 149 BC), M. Iunius Brutus (*pr.* 142 BC) and P. Mucius Scaevola (*cos.* 133 BC), indicated a shift from the *mores maiorum* towards a legalism that paved the way for the Gracchan reform programme. The focus of this new jurisprudence, both in civil and private law, shifted from the obsolete conventions of *legis actiones* to actual legislation, leaving behind the bulk of unwritten constitutional conventions that prohibited, for instance, the deposition of fellow tribunes, re-election to the tribunate, and election to the tribunate after having held the consulship.¹¹

raised a clamour'. Liv. *Epit.* 50 mentions a struggle by the plebs who were supporting Scipio Aemilianus: '*cum magno certamine suffragantis plebis et repugnantibus ei aliquamdiu patribus, legibus solutus et consul creatus*'. Cf. Plut. *Aem.* 38.3.

⁹ Cf. Astin (1967:61-69, 187-88) for the extent to which popular demonstration played a role in second century elections under the Scipios.

¹⁰ The introduction of formulary procedures, for instance, placed the existing legal system (which was originally drafted for a peasant community) under considerable strain.

¹¹ The *lex Calpurnia* of 149 BC introduced Rome's first permanent extortion court (Cic. *Brut.* 27) and could, for instance, be seen as an anti-corruption measure taken to curb the abuse of power. Magistrates could be prosecuted in public for official misconduct, where, previously, it was illegal to summon *in iure* someone who had himself the power of summons. Bribery (a capital crime) during elections, for instance, could not be prevented and was accepted as normal political conduct until Scaevola in 142 BC passed a plebiscite to investigate the praetor L. Hostilius Tubulus on charges of bribery. This was followed three years later by the *lex Gabinia* which introduced the secret ballot for all elections (Liv. *Ox. Per.* 54). The ruling class was slowly beginning to conceptualise institutional reforms as solutions to problems, instead of just responding to emergencies with temporary expedients. Cf. Horvath (1994:98-105).

The passing of new legislation became the main agent of political change in the Roman republic, to such an extent that it must be considered that the sovereign body of the *res publica* was no longer the senate, but the *populus Romanus*.¹² Against this pattern of popular sovereignty, Sulla's forceful counter-revolution in 82 BC, and the constitutional changes which were imposed to strengthen the power of the senate, must be considered an aberration in the greater trend in Roman politics.¹³ By the seventies BC the elements of popular politics were beginning to re-emerge. In 75 BC tribunes could once more stand for further office, while tribunes from 74 BC onwards could again be heard from the rostra before *contiones*¹⁴ and grain was again provided at a modest price for the people.¹⁵

Within the senatorial oligarchy factional politics had all but vanished, and once again in 77 BC the senate found itself in a position where it had, out of necessity, to confer an extraordinary command on a popular general, this time Gnaeus Pompeius, who felt obliged to crush both the followers of Lepidus (*cos.* 78 BC, demanding re-election in 77 BC) and the rebellion in Spain under Sertorius.¹⁶ The course of popular politics resumed its traditional pattern when Pompeius and Crassus as consuls for 70 BC restored to the tribunes the legislative powers removed by Sulla. As a consequence of this, the sixties became representative of an era in which *leges* were passed by the people to establish the major commands that were needed for successful Roman conquests and colonisation, while the senate, in displaying its lack of power and authority, stood to a large extent as a mere spectator amidst a series of military and political crises.

In retaliation to senatorial opposition, powerful generals such as Pompeius, Crassus and Caesar formed alliances to meet their respective political aims. With the support of

¹² Roman office, after all, was a *beneficium* bestowed by the *populus*, who could legislate by casting votes in person.

¹³ Sulla, however, did not hesitate in 88 BC to employ popular tactics when he considered his *dignitas* injured and he exploited his client army to march on Rome. Only after having restored his *dignitas* through the violent removal of the Marians, did Sulla introduce reforms to strengthen the position of the senate by restricting tribunician legislative power through its subjection to senatorial consent.

¹⁴ Cic. *Cluent.* 110-12.

¹⁵ Cic. *Off.* 2.17, 58.

¹⁶ The reception of extraordinary powers seems to have become a hallmark of Pompeius' career: in 70 BC he became consul despite being under the required age, in 67 the *lex Gabinia* empowered him to deal with piracy in the Mediterranean, the Manilian law of 66 gave him his Asiatic provinces as well as the command for the third Mithridatic war, and in 52 he became sole consul amidst a period of intense rioting.

Pompeius and Crassus, Caesar, during his consulship in 59 BC, rapidly whisked the illusion of senatorial power into thin air. Thus began the final countdown towards one-man rule: in disregard of convention, Caesar's rule blurred the traditional legislative domains of consular and tribunician conduct.¹⁷ As was to be expected, his proposed legislation was met with seemingly strong, but in effect hollow, senatorial opposition. Caesar consistently took his proposal to the people, but ignored the vetoes of three tribunes and forcibly, by means of an armed force, prevented his colleague Bibulus from speaking against the proposed bill; Cato, too, was removed from the platform with no less force. The eventual passing of the bill, in the midst of violence and in defiance of the veto, was unconstitutional and Bibulus unsuccessfully protested against it in the senate.¹⁸ Bibulus was himself not averse to employing popular politics. Public opinion was influenced against the men in power, mainly by the posting of edicts (not only by himself but by others in his coterie) attacking the conduct of Pompeius and Caesar, accusing them of the all too familiar archetypal sins of *regnum* and tyranny.¹⁹ When demonstrations and riots prevented elections in 53 BC and played havoc on the Roman political scene, Pompeius, then at odds with his former ally, Caesar, was appointed sole consul to stabilise the situation. But the scene was already set for civil war. This danger was perhaps not fully realised within the echelons of the Roman nobility. Here our best source is the perceptions and pronouncements of Marcus Caelius Rufus on both past and contemporary political events, as well as his thoughts on the future political upheavals awaiting Rome.

Discussion of sources, will, however form the material of the next chapter, which will concentrate on Cicero's writings as primary source, but will also attempt to compare these with the only other contemporary narrative of the era, Caesar's *Commentarii*. It will also need to touch upon the kind of sources that Cicero had consulted, but this aspect will be more expansively treated in Chapters Six and Seven.

¹⁷ This is clearly seen in his proposal of an agrarian bill in 59 to provide land outside Campania both for Pompeius' veterans and needy citizens in Rome. The bill was carried and followed by a supplementary bill by which the Campanian land (already occupied by state tenants) was to be redistributed to both veterans and fathers of three children or more. Traditionally such legislation was proposed by tribunes, not consuls.

¹⁸ Quasi-religious efforts by Bibulus (his watching of the heavens) to deter Caesar from passing further legislation proved useless. Caesar disregarded not only tribunician vetoes but *obnuntiatio* as well, and continued tribune-like to submit proposed legislation to the people, by this leaving himself vulnerable to the danger of future prosecution, as proved the case in 49 BC.

4. The evidence

4.1 Cicero as primary source

Contemporary evidence for the first century BC, especially the Ciceronian age as our better documented period in Roman history, is to be found mainly in extant literary works from the era. As is well-known, Cicero's surviving works provide the main informative picture of the late-Republican social, political and cultural Roman milieu. In the light of his experience of the period of Sulla's march on Rome, and the subsequent civil war, together with its proscriptions, Cicero's account of the period provides a concentrated picture of a political process that had its origins in the previous century, which started with the predominance of the Scipios, to be succeeded by the Gracchi, next the powerful generals Marius, Sulla and Pompeius, and which was, finally, to witness the ascendance of Caesar.

The historical importance of Cicero's correspondence as the main primary source for the events of the last years of the Roman republic is well recognised and the abundance of extant letters places it amongst some of the most remarkable collections of Latin texts preserved from antiquity. The *corpus* of the correspondence has been preserved in two main collections: Cicero's letters to his close friend Atticus *Ad Atticum*, and the letters to and from various friends and acquaintances *Ad familiares*. Also extant are two smaller collections: *Ad Quintum fratrem et M. Brutum* addressed to his brother and Marcus Brutus.¹ The greater part of the substance of the letters addressed to Atticus focuses on contemporary political events covering the years 68 – 43 BC. Not only does it convey Cicero's own political views and thoughts, but indirectly also those of Atticus, who, despite his declared abstinence from politics, appears to have shown a keen interest in the politics of the day. Apparently Cicero regarded Atticus as a natural politician (*Att.* 4.6.1); like young Caelius he displayed sound political instincts (*Att.* 4.14.2), he befriended the aristocracy, had various business contacts, and was highly admired by Cicero for both his

¹ The letters have received excellent presentation and commentary by Shackleton Bailey (cf. Chapter Two above). All Latin citations from Cicero's correspondence used in this dissertation are taken from the text of Shackleton Bailey unless otherwise noted. For still the most detailed discussion of the relationship between Atticus and Cicero, see Shackleton Bailey (1965: vol. 1 3-59); for treatment of both Atticus himself and assessment of his political importance, see Perlwitz (1992), Welch (1996), Lindsay (1998).

sound political opinion and his political forecasts. The collection of letters to Atticus is most revealing as it functions as a sounding board for Cicero's thoughts and moods on a scale unparalleled in antiquity.² With Atticus, Cicero writes, he is able to converse as if speaking to his alter-ego: '*Ego tecum tamquam mecum loquor*' (Att. 8.14.2), the one person in whom he can confide without pretence: '*quicum ego cum loquar nihil fingam, nihil dissimulem, nihil obtegam*' (Att. 1.18.1).

The informal letters to Cicero's other *intimi* (for instance, Caelius, Trebatius Testa and P. Paetus) are less intimate than those written to Atticus, and the letters addressed to various *proximi* show Cicero approaching less trustworthy members of the aristocracy with much less candour.

Cicero's political disillusionment during the fifties (expressed in his correspondence of the period) and exclusion from independent political activity were probably two of the main reasons for his undertaking of the *De republica*. Armed with political philosophy he attempts to influence, encourage and educate contemporary rulers to exercise their power effectively without abusing it. Set against the realism of contemporary power politics (where the balance between the principles of rule by the one, the few, and the many had been disrupted), in emulation of Plato, the work presents Cicero's political ideals, his theoretical stance that individuals of exceptional character and prudence should guide society.³

Although Cicero frequently quotes Plato, traces of the Peripatetic school of Aristotle are also to be found in his oeuvre.⁴ That Cicero had recourse to the Greek theory relating to kingship seems probable given Cicero's depiction of the 'ideal statesman' and its opposite the tyrant.⁵ Assumedly Cicero had access to contemporary historical works that

² Cicero's letters were greatly admired in antiquity. Cf. Nepos *fr.* 58, Quint. 10.1.107, Plin. *Ep.* 9.2.2.

³ See Chapter Seven below. Such an individual is described in *Orat.* 1.211, *Rep.* 2.51, *Qfr.* 3.5.1, *Att.* 8.11.1 and is generally agreed to be identified with the *optimus civis* or the *rector rei publicae*.

⁴ See Chapter Two above, Chapters Six and Seven below.

⁵ Chapter Seven below.

dealt with political theory.⁶ In *De republica*, his first serious attempt to adapt Greek theory to Roman practical politics, he appears to have been familiar with the work of Polybius,⁷ on whose political theory he seems to draw in part.⁸ Amongst the Roman writers Cicero appeals to the political concepts of, for instance, Cato who, in his lost work *Origines*, apparently held the belief that the state and its success were the collective achievement of the Roman people and not exclusively that of individuals (*Rep.* 2.2). In this Cato probably followed a tradition received from his predecessors, Fabius Pictor who wrote in Greek, Cincius, Naevius and Ennius – also alluded to by Cicero.⁹

We shall see then that knowledge of Greek philosophical and political theory,¹⁰ together with Roman historical experience, enable Cicero not only to examine a Roman political scene dominated by the effects of civil war, but also to construe a picture of increasing internal rivalry in the bid of various individuals to gain absolute power. To make a more balanced assessment of Cicero's evidence as contemporary witness for the intentions of the major political role players, we need to compare his observations and interpretations with the only other surviving contemporary documents of the period – the *Commentarii* of Caesar.

In what follows a brief overview of Caesar's *Commentarii* as compared to Cicero's correspondence will be given.

4.2 Caesar's *Commentarii* vs Cicero's correspondence

If one is to construe Cicero's *De republica*¹¹ as, on the one hand, a futile restatement of the Roman ideology of the 'mixed constitution' and, on the other hand, as his desperate

⁶ Both Cicero and Atticus show familiarity with the political theoretical work of for instance Dicaearchus (*Att.* 2.2.2 'πελληνάϊων', 2.16.3). In 45 Cicero was seeking to read a work by Dicaearchus (presumably on the theory of the mixed constitution), called the Τριπολιτικὸν (*Att.* 13.32.2).

⁷ Cf. *Rep.* 1.34.10, 2.27.12, 4.3.7, *Att.* 13.30.2, *Fam.* 5.12.2, *Off.* 3.113.6.

⁸ See Chapter Six below.

⁹ *Rep.* 1.27, *Brut.* 66.1, 75.4, 89.12, 294.6, *Sen.* 38.7, 75.9, *Tusc.* 1.3.11, 4.3.15, *Planc.* 66.1.

¹⁰ See Chapters Five and Seven below.

¹¹ See below, Chapter Five.

attempt to encourage contemporary politicians towards *virtus* amidst the sweep of events during the late fifties,¹² *De bello civili* of Caesar presents a very different picture. It offers, not an *imago* of the past in varied *exempla*,¹³ but the very image of Caesar himself, embodied in his works as the founding father of a new dispensation.

It is generally accepted that, as a commentary, *De bello civili* reads as a document not only of self-justification, but also as a very effective tool for propaganda.¹⁴ Apparently one of the main goals envisaged by Caesar in writing *De bello civili* was to put on full public display a *persona* of 'Caesar as a traditionalist', who had the interest of the *res publica* at heart. Caesar's frequent claims of having 'acted in the interest of the state' in opposing Pompeius, were probably intended to mollify mainly his contemporaries in the Roman senate by emphasising what he calls his past efforts to avoid the conflict that subsequently erupted in 49. As such *De bello civili* constitutes not only a work of propaganda, but also a work of literature, rhetorically coloured and elaborated (as in the ancient literary historiographical tradition) to Caesar's own advantage.¹⁵ Although it is generally termed a *commentarium* (basic relation of events) some of its nuancing lends itself to interpretation as an attempt at the application of ancient historiographical conventions to his narrative. Here it is useful to distinguish an 'authorial Caesar' that projects a 'protagonist Caesar' opposing a dangerous antagonist Pompeius.

There is so far insufficient evidence to determine an exact date for the composition and publication of *De bello civili*,¹⁶ but it was probably not published before January 49 when Cicero *in mediis rebus* was also recording his observation of the immediate events of war in a letter to Atticus.¹⁷ This letter of Cicero's (*Att.* 7.13) makes abundantly clear that there was scope as well as reason enough for Caesar to desire self-justification of his war actions in the eyes of his contemporaries. Of these Cicero was very likely not the only

¹² Cf. Cicero's description during the late fifties of the *res publica* as a faded picture, nothing more than a mere word (*Rep.* 5.1.2), forestalling Caesar's remark that the *res publica* has become a name without a body (Suet. *Iul.* 77). Cf. Chapter Six section two.

¹³ Cicero's array of historical *exempla* in *De republica* may very well seem like the *imagines* of a funerary procession.

¹⁴ Collins (1972), Hayne (1995).

¹⁵ Collins (1972:945) likens *De bello civili* to 'a good epic poem'.

¹⁶ Cf. Collins (1972:944), Macfarlane (1996).

¹⁷ *Att.* 7.13. See below.

one to have found himself in the dark (*quid agitur? mihi enim tenebrae sunt*).¹⁸ In fact, Cicero's correspondence of 49 testifies to the general atmosphere of uncertainty that prevailed among the majority of Caesar's contemporaries. It stands in stark contrast to the impression of self-assurance that Caesar (albeit with hindsight after the completion of his campaign) seems to convey when he displays himself as at the time knowing exactly what he was about to accomplish.

In his description of the war involved, Cicero does not hesitate to call the hostilities a 'civil war' (*quamquam genus belli quod sit vides: ita civile est*).¹⁹ This is in contrast to Caesar, who for most of the narrative of *De bello civili*, seems to avoid the expression. The responsibility for this conflict Cicero places squarely on the shoulders of Caesar, who is depicted as an 'audacious, unscrupulous, all-powerful, untrustworthy and avaricious individual' (*Att.* 7.13.1).²⁰

Cicero sees Caesar as a very real threat to the *res publica* of old, but is unsure of precisely what to expect from him. He does, however, seem to recognise that a new dispensation has begun without even the façade of constitutional procedure: '*quid autem sit acturus aut quo modo nescio, sine senatu, sine magistratibus; ne simulare quidem poterit quicquam πολιτικῶς*.' This letter, as most of Cicero's correspondence of January 49, rings with frequent allusions to foreknowledge or the lack thereof. Vocabulary of uncertainty conveys the tone of the letter: '*quid ... quo modo, nescio, ubi ... quando*' (*Att.* 13.1.11-13), '*nec vero nunc quid cogitet scio ... non desino*' (13.2.1), '*quid futurum sit non video*' (13.2.8), '*dubito quid agam*' (13.3.1). Even Atticus' customary riddles do not seem to make sense as easily as before: '*aenigma ... non intellexi; est enim numero Platonis obscurus*' (13.5.1).²¹

¹⁸ *Att.* 7.11.1.

¹⁹ *Att.* 7.13.1. Cf. Caesar's euphemisms for civil war: *dissensionis* (*BC* 1.29.1, 3.88.2), *quod in bello plerumque accidere consuivit* (3.32.5).

²⁰ '*quod sit vides: ita civile est ut non ex civium dissensione sed ex unius periti civis audacia natum sit. is autem valet exercitu, tenet multos spe et promissis, omnia omnium concupivit*'.

²¹ Cicero's reference to the enigmatic Platonic number may even convey a political message to Atticus, underlining a serious, if not catastrophic turn of events for the future of the state. This could be an indication of Ciceronian foreboding - a process where, according to Platonic thought, the decline of a constitution was set in motion under control of a mathematical number when the 'guardians' of the state chose to ignore their responsibilities as wise rulers. Cf. Plato *Rep.* 546.

In contrast to Cicero's picture of Caesar, the 'Caesar', who is the 'hero' of *De bello civili* is presented as clearheaded, calculating, non-emotional, in no way resembling anything undecided in his intentions.²² Nevertheless, Caesar's narrative displays a defensive tone unlike that found in his commentary on the Gallic wars. Caesar's self-portrait here shows him as 'defender' of the *res publica* whose prime objective is to seek peace. In striving towards this aim and in his acts of patriotism he is opposed by the enemies of the *res publica* (*BC* 1.32.3, 3.90.2). Therefore, Caesar writes of a 'war being fought for peace', a non-war so to speak, with its main contender explicitly denying any desire for conflict were it not that his *dignitas* had been slighted in his very efforts to negotiate peace. Caesar could thus argue that despite the affronts he had to suffer to his *dignitas*, he nevertheless endured all for the sake of the *res publica*. Such claims of desiring only peace could very well mitigate relations between Caesar himself and those who favoured the type of policy of conciliation as propagated by Cicero before the outbreak of hostilities.

This seemed in stark contrast to the antagonist in this peace-keeping war, namely Pompeius, who, according to Cicero, had stated his own conviction of the inevitability of war, and also preferred war to a peace that involved concession of any kind to Caesar.²³ Thus Pompeius' uncompromising attitude (as we see it reported by Cicero) is mirrored by Caesar's protestations that he himself was in the clear and that his opposition, the Pompeians, were to be blamed for the outbreak of the civil war.²⁴ The Caesarian picture of Pompeius the would-be autocrat not willing to share power (*BC* 35.1, 3.10.7) seems to be designed to destroy any vestiges of Pompeius' moral credibility that might have been present in the minds of Pompeian supporters. This portrait serves as an example of Caesar's technique of blackening the opposition through selective presentation of their motives.²⁵ Cicero, for instance, showed growing criticism of the greed, over-confidence and the dissent that was prevalent among Pompeian supporters in camp (*Att.* 11.6.2).²⁶

²² Despite the war situation Caesar stresses the quality of behaving '*aequo animo*' (*BC* 1.9.3, 58.4, 75.2, 3.6.1, 15.5, 41.5).

²³ *Att.* 7.4.2, 7.8.4.

²⁴ Cf. the rare instances where Caesar refers to the war as *bellum*, always in reference to Pompeius as role-player (*BC* 1.25.3, 26.6).

²⁵ One may expect censoring from Caesar even in this early phase of his take-over. Cicero's reference to Caesar as 'guardian' overseeing their writing certainly suggests as much for the dictator years (*Fam.* 7.25.1).

²⁶ Cf. Caesar *BC* 3.82-3.

In a letter of early March 49 addressed to Oppius and Cornelius, Caesar explicitly denied that any possible parallels in motive existed between his ‘war’ and that of Sulla against Marius which had been about power, not defence of the constitution. Here he clearly stated that he had no intention of imitating Sulla’s rule of cruelty (*Att.* 9.7c.1). Also he saw his ‘war’ as a new form of conquest: ‘*haec nova sit ratio vincendi ut misericordia et liberalitate nos muniamus*’ in which the *Leitmotiv* is to be *clementia*²⁷ thus facilitating a receptive majority of the conquered who would, and indeed did, according to Caesar (*BC* 1.12-18), welcome his victory. Cicero, however, was of a different opinion at the time and preferred to see Caesar as a second Hannibal (*Att.* 7.11.1) rushing through the Italian landscape, intent on the destruction of Rome.

Cicero’s correspondence serves not only as a corrective, in some instances, for Caesar’s *De bello civili*, but also as confirmation of events mentioned in the literary tradition on the civil war. Taking that as a given, we need also to consider the broad philosophical framework at Rome against which these events, which both authors’ report, could have been judged of by either, before concentrating on Cicero’s own position within the field.

²⁷ Caesar often harps on his *lenitas*, his ability to refrain from harming his opponents (*incolumes*), his forgiveness in sending them away (*demittere*) even having their well-being at heart (*conservare*). Even Caelius is heard singing the praises of Caesar’s *temperantia* (*Fam.* 8.15.1).

5. Philosophy and politics

5.1 Roman exposure to philosophy in the second and first centuries BC

Before focusing on Cicero himself, a brief overview of Greek philosophy at Rome will work as an introduction.

Roman contact with Hellenistic civilisation in the third and second century BC was stimulated mainly by the visits of Greek intellectuals, ambassadors, artists and teachers as well as the fact that educated Greek slaves were employed in affluent Roman households. In time Greek cultural influence on literature, rhetoric and philosophy established its hold on educated Romans, thereby paving the way for a broader Roman appreciation and acceptance of the Hellenistic view that favours and recognises the benefits of a rhetorical and philosophical training, essential in the pursuit of a successful public career.¹

¹ Initially, conservative Romans appear to have regarded Greek philosophy in general with suspicion, associating it with an unpractical life style of excessive leisure. In 173 BC for instance, second century Roman hostility to Greek philosophy led to the temporary expulsion of two Epicurean philosophers from Rome. A decade later, in 161 BC, the senate instructed that philosophers as well as rhetoricians be forbidden to live in Rome (Suet. *Rhet.*1), probably bearing in mind the rival claims of both disciplines as to their ability to educate the young. Gellius ascribes similar hostile action towards philosophers and rhetoricians (*NA* 15.11.2) as Roman reaction to the possibly subversive effects that new doctrine might have had on traditional religious, moral and political beliefs. Gellius also mentions later Roman restraining measures taken against rhetoricians and philosophers in 92 BC, when the senate decreed the following: '*Renuntiatur est nobis esse homines, qui novum genus disciplinae instituerunt, ad quos iuventus in ludum conveniat; eos sibi nomen inposuisse Latinos rhetoras; ibi homines adolescentulos dies totos desiderare. Maiores nostri, quae liberos suos discere et quos in ludos itare vellent, instituerunt. Haec nova, quae praeter consuetudinem ac morem maiorum fiunt, neque placent neque recta videntur. Quapropter et his, qui eos ludos habent, et his, qui eo venire consueverunt, visum est faciundum, ut ostenderemus nostram sententiam nobis non placere*' (emphasis mine). However, criticism against this decree (Cic. *Orat.* 2.45) indicated that the influence of Greek culture was not to be stopped. As early as 155 BC, when an Athenian embassy came to Rome, the Elder Cato must have recognised the increasing impact of Greek culture on Roman society. The embassy comprised three philosophers: Critolaus the Peripatetic, Diogenes the Stoic and Carneades of the Sceptical Academy (Gellius *NA* 17.21.48). These philosophers, sent on a political mission, succeeded in persuading the senate to reduce a fine imposed on Athens for the sack of Oropus. Their skill in argument impressed even Cato, upholder of Roman tradition and virtue, who professed hostility to all things Greek. On hearing of the philosopher's successful public lectures on philosophy, Cato had to persuade the reluctant senate to hasten procedures for their speedy return to Athens, so that the impressionable youth of Rome could rather focus their attention on Roman laws and magistrates (Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 22, 23, Pliny *NH* 29.7.14). Seneca refers to these philosophers, who had once been driven from Rome, as *corruptores iuventutis* (*Helv.* 10.8). During the first century of the common era (in AD 89), another decree, referred to by Gellius (*NA* 15.11.3), again drove philosophers from Rome, forbidding them to stay in Italy. In this case, Stoic opposition to imperial rule may have been the overriding reason. Cf. Claassen (1999:64-67) for Stoic opposition to imperial rule in the first century AD.

From the mid-second century onwards, it became customary for members of the Roman aristocracy to patronise Greek philosophers. Roman patronage of philosophy initially seems to have risen from intellectual curiosity. This arrangement proved to be mutually beneficial for both patron and philosopher as patrons increased their literary and scientific knowledge while offering in return political protection and material benefits.

The first instances of philosophical patronage in Rome included the relationships of Scipio Aemilianus with the Stoic Panaetius of Rhodes (c. 185-109), who, in 140 BC, had accompanied him on his embassy in the East, and that of T. Gracchus and the Stoic Blossius of Cumae, who had also acted as devoted guide and loyal friend (Plut. *TG* 1.3, Cic. *Brut.* 104, Quint. 1.1.6). It was not unusual for leading Roman families of the late republic to have Greek literary and philosophical clients in their entourage.² The nature of such relationships was complex: men like L. Caesoninus Piso (*cos.* 58), the Luculli and Pompeius were able to advance and maintain an influential following in the East, either through friendship (for instance the relationship between Piso and the Epicurean Philodemus), or by taking philosophers as companions on their campaigns (the poet Archias accompanied both M. and L. Lucullus), or even as political advisers, as was the case with Pompeius' patronage of Theophanes of Mytilene. The importance of Panaetius (as that of the Greek intellectual and historiographer, Polybius)³ for Scipio Aemilianus might just as well have been of a political nature, taking into account his acquaintance as Greek native with Greek customs and the politics of the East. Cf. Glucker's view (1978:26, 91-92) that one of the main functions of a Greek φίλος και συμβιωτης was to act as a guide and mouthpiece for his patron in an Eastern milieu. Antiochus of Ascalon acted in such a capacity for L. Lucullus in 87-86 BC. Political issues were often a point of discussion between Scipio, Polybius and Panaetius (Cic. *Rep.* 1.34).⁴

² This tendency of the Roman aristocracy to acquire foreign intellectuals as clients became a typical phenomenon among the second century Roman elite who fostered the development of a Roman literary culture and used it as a political tool to preserve and promulgate the interests of their class. Cf. Habinek (1998:39) who associates '[t]he invention of Latin literature with the survival strategies of the traditional Roman leadership in the wake of the Hannibalic invasion.'

³ Polybius, for instance (31.23.9-12), found nothing unusual in the idea of offering his advice to Scipio on the art of creating a public image, that is, the art of speaking and performance in a manner worthy of one's ancestors.

⁴ Cf. also Griffin's remarks (1989:25-27) on the possible political involvement of Blossius in Roman politics. It remains a difficult task to discern with certainty the exact influence on both patron and client of such mutually beneficial relationships. Cicero does not seem to regard

Roman interest in philosophy received impetus again in the early first century when Rome experienced a steady influx of Greek intellectuals. As a result of the take-over in Athens by a Mithridatic faction during the eighties BC, a number of Athenian philosophers fled Athens and migrated to Rome where they continued giving public lectures. This influx stimulated Roman interest in philosophical thought as it was predominantly represented by the philosophical schools of the Stoics, Epicureans, Peripatetics and Sceptics.

5.2 Cicero's philosophical background

During this period of increasing philosophical activity at Rome, the young Cicero began his philosophical training. When he was about sixteen, Cicero, together with Atticus, attended the lectures of Phaidros, who acquainted them with the doctrine of Epicureanism, to which Atticus was converted.⁵ Cicero's enthusiasm for Epicurean doctrine was, however, not long lasting, probably because he disagreed with the Epicureans' dogmatic idealisation of pleasure (*Fin.* 1.34-36, 2.69), their reliance on the senses, and their abstention from public affairs.⁶

After his Epicurean encounter Cicero studied dialectic with the Stoic Diodotus (*Brut.* 308-9). Diodotus, a learned Greek who taught philosophy, dialectic, music and geometry, took up residence in Cicero's household about 85 BC (*Tusc.* 113) where he remained till his death.

Blossius as a mere supporter of Tiberius Gracchus, in fact he refers to him as *dux*, even though Blossius went free after an enquiry was held against the supporters of Tiberius Gracchus (*Cic. Amic.* 37, *Val. Max.* 4.7.1). Leaving Rome, Blossius appears to have sided with the peasants, when he joined Aristonius' unsuccessful peasant revolt against Rome in Asia, a circumstance that apparently resulted in his suicide. It seems as if political considerations were the main drive behind Blossius' involvement with Roman politics. Dudley (1941) has shown that it is difficult to ascribe any of Blossius' political beliefs to Stoicism.

⁵ *Cic. Att.* 13.39.2, 16.7.4, *Fam.* 13.1.2.

⁶ Cicero at times refers disparagingly to Epicureans as *barones*, less gifted intellectuals who lack the taste for culture (*Att.* 5.11.6, *Fam.* 9.26.3) while he regards their writings as 'formless' (*Fam.* 13.1). Nevertheless, Cicero does mention his acquaintance with the Epicurean Zeno of Sidon, whom he had met in Athens, where Cicero spent six months sometimes accompanying Atticus to some of Phaidros' lectures (*Leg.* 1.53, *Fin.* 1.16.5, *Tusc.* 3.38, *DND* 1.93, *Acad.* 1.46). On Cicero's early education cf. *Brut.* 306 – 312, 315, 316, *Tusc.* 2.9.

The eighties BC also witnessed the arrival in Rome of Philo of Larissa (c. 160 - c. 83 BC) as a refugee from Athens, who introduced Cicero to Academic Scepticism, a philosophy that Cicero found attractive. He spent several years (from about 88 to 81 BC) studying this field. About 79 BC Cicero left Rome to study rhetoric with Apollonius Molon of Rhodes. He stopped over in Athens, where he spent six months studying rhetoric and philosophy in the company of Atticus, his brother Quintus, and cousin L. Cicero. Here Marcus Cicero encountered Philo's younger contemporary and pupil, Antiochus of Ascalon, who had eventually abandoned the scepticism of Philo, claiming to have reconstructed the original doctrine of Plato's Early Academy, while he also absorbed much of the Stoic doctrine. Antiochus called his school of philosophy the 'Old Academy'.⁷

At Rhodes Cicero also met Posidonius (to whom he refers as 'the greatest of the Stoics') and listened to his lectures.⁸ Cicero appears (at least for a while) to have been impressed by the popular appeal that the teaching of the Stoicising Antiochus had gained.⁹ In the long run Cicero's regard for Stoicism was probably inhibited by the Stoics' dogmatic stance, for instance on issues such as the possible attainment of human perfection and the unrealistic ideal of absolute virtue. Even though Cicero might have disapproved of Antiochus' innovation and his abandoning of the doctrine of the New Academy of Carneades (so Plutarch *Cic.* 4), he seems to have had great admiration for Antiochus' ability as shrewd writer and philosopher.¹⁰ In the end, however, Cicero re-embraced the sceptical philosophy of the Academy. This aspect will be touched upon throughout in discussion of Cicero's political writings.

⁷ See note 11 below.

⁸ *Cic. Hort. fr.* 18, *Div.* 1.57, 130, *Tusc.* 2, 25, 61.

⁹ *Fin.* 5.7, *Acad.* 15-18, *Luc.* 13-15, *Tusc.* 1.55.

¹⁰ *Cic. Luc.* 113: 'iudico, politissimum et acutissimum omnium nostrae memoriae philosophorum.' Cf. *Luc.* 2.4, 69.

5.3 Cicero's affiliation with the sceptical New Academy¹¹

Much of the history of the successive schools of Academic scepticism is vague and it is open to various interpretations. What follows necessarily simplifies a complex topic.

Before fleeing to Rome, Philo of Larissa, now designated head of the 'Fourth Academy', succeeded Clitomachus, the pupil and successor of Carneades (c. 219 - c. 129 BC), who had been the founder of the New Academy. Among his contemporaries Carneades had the reputation as an outstanding dialectician and controversialist.¹² This information depends on an indirect tradition transcribed by Clitomachus,¹³ and transmitted by Philo, Cicero and Sextus Empiricus.

The dispute between the Stoics and the sceptical Academy begun by Arcesilaus and Zeno (about 273 BC) was continued in all earnest by Carneades and Chrysippus, with Carneades contending that sceptic ἀκατάληψία stood for the unattainability of Stoic κατάληψις.¹⁴ The sceptical Academy's main purpose was to demonstrate that the Stoic criterion of 'absolute' truth does not exist. Carneades applied the same method of argument as Arcesilaus, but differed from him mainly on the principle of ἐποχή, arguing

¹¹ The term 'sceptic' (σκεπτικός) is traditionally used in histories of Greek philosophy to designate both the Academy from Arcesilaus to Carneades and the Pyrrhonists. Striker (1989) has shown that the word seems to have been introduced as a terminological label relatively late in the development of Hellenistic philosophy. Striker identifies A. Gellius as the earliest extant source to use the terminological label of the 'Sceptics' (*NA* 9.5) to refer to both Academics and Pyrrhonists in the sense that both argued from the position that nothing can be known. Classification of the various developments of the 'Sceptical Academy' has been a problem since ancient times. I follow Hankinson (1995) whereby 'Sceptical Academy' denotes the Academy from Arcesilaus' Middle Academy, followed by Carneades' Third or New Academy, down to that of Philo of Larissa's Fourth Academy. Cf. Glucker (1978:346 n. 37) for the use of the Pyrrhonic term 'sceptic' in a distinction between Plato's Early Academy and the sceptical schools of Arcesilaus, Carneades and their pupils (who were only known as 'Academics'). Arcesilaus, as founder of Academic scepticism, saw himself as a true Platonist. According to Sedley (1983:10-11) Arcesilaus in essence borrowed his method of including ἐποχή about all things (suspension of assent) from Plato's early dialogues, where arguing a current thesis and counter-argument would always result in a stalemate, and that it was, by common consent, this calculated quest for ἐποχή that gave Arcesilaus and his school its distinction. It is to this tradition of Academic scepticism (that regarded Plato as a sceptic in the Socratic manner), that Cicero felt himself attracted (*Luc.* 74.1).

¹² Diog. Laert. 4.62.

¹³ Cic. *Luc.* 98, 102, *Or.* 51.

¹⁴ Carneades was known to have remarked: 'If there had been no Chrysippus, there would have been no Carneades' (Diog. Laert. 4.62). Cf. Couissin's view (1929) that much of the arguments of the sceptical Academy was a reaction against Stoicism and to its over confident claims to knowledge.

that it is impossible to suspend judgement on all matters, and that there is a difference between what is non-evident and what is non-apprehensible, and that while everything is non-apprehensible, not everything is non-evident.¹⁵ Whereas Arcesilaus had maintained that the wise man should hold no opinions, Carneades introduced his concept of *πιθανόν* (plausibility) to provide reasonable justification for actions, while he aimed not at the truth, but at what appeared plausible to the multitude. It was also a criterion which could help one to choose with probability (but never with certainty) between various perceptions.

Carneades adopted the practice of arguing on both sides of a question, a method whereby any positive assertion could be refuted or weakened. Cicero gives a version of Carneades' two public lectures on justice (*Rep.* 3.8-11, 21, 23) where he, on the first occasion, defended conventional notions of justice, and on the second occasion, refuted the previous discourse.¹⁶ In his doctrine Carneades emphasised plausibility against certainty, not only in opposition to the Stoics, but against any dogmatic tradition. This form of sceptical controversialism seems to have attracted Cicero, who, through his training as an orator and lawyer, was always ready to argue on both sides of a question.

Cicero attended the Academy in a period when both Sceptics and Stoics showed more leniency towards one another in a climate of general softening of strict philosophical divisions. At this time different versions of Carneades' scepticism existed in the various sceptical schools and arguments for the validity of sense-perception gained support.¹⁷ Furthermore, a growing awareness of the image of Plato as dogmatist, offered by Panaetius and his school, forced Philo to defend his position as undisputed head of an

¹⁵ Eus. *Praep. Ev.* 14.7.15.

¹⁶ Carneades' disputation of justice here, was not an attack against Stoicism (Cic. *Rep.* 3.8), but rather a demonstration of the sceptical Academic technique *in utramque partem disputare* to show that one could argue with equal force for and against the views of Plato and Aristotle (Lact. *Inst. Div.* 16.10). The discussion of justice in book three of *De republica* survives only in a very fragmentary form in a palimpsest (see Hahn 1999:167), and consists of a set of three speeches: The first, a speech by L. Furius Philo, is allegedly modelled on the second pair of speeches by Carneades for and against justice. From this speech the introduction survives in *Rep.* 3.8-31; this is followed by the second speech, a defence of justice by C. Laelius (3.32-41), and the third speech, an explanation by Scipio Aemilianus of the role of justice in various forms of government (3.42-8).

¹⁷ Cf. Glucker (1978:78) for the views, for instance, of the Metrodorus group who recognised the Stoic 'common-sense' distinction between normal everyday perceptions and less clear perceptions in dreams or hallucinations.

Academy that claimed its doctrinal origins from Plato, especially in the light of the claim of his former pupil, Antiochus, that his 'Old Academy' was actually the true heir to Platonism. Philo took as his line of defence denial that the Academy had ever adopted a position of absolute scepticism, and indicated that Plato was not an absolute sceptic.¹⁸ In effect he claimed that ever since Plato, the Academic tradition, in its modest disavowal of human access to absolute truth, had fundamentally never changed.¹⁹ In his Roman Books Philo maintained (as Carneades did) that in practice there can be no certain criterion for distinguishing true from false impressions. In addition to this he also claimed that, by the mere fact of holding this principle, the sceptical Academy was already of necessity admitting that such a distinction existed *in rerum natura*.²⁰ Philo now adopted the un-Carneadean position that ἐναργεία (clarity) may be a guide to the truth²¹ and maintained that that had been the view of the Academy all along. Philo's views on the validity of sense-perception was not accepted by other Academics. Heraclitus of Tyre, for instance, in discussing the books with Antiochus at Alexandria (about 87/86 BC), denied that such concession to Stoic ideas was possible within the limits of the Academy, while the Roman Elder Catulus accused Philo of lying (*Luc.* 18.5-8). Antiochus, on the other hand, felt that Philo was contradicting himself by asserting that truth exists and can be known as an absolute, but that there is no safe criterion for discovering such truth in practice.

Initially, in his formative period, Cicero declared allegiance to Philo's moderate scepticism (*Inv.* 2.10) and reiterated this in his later years (*DND* 1.11, *Off.* 2.7). This declaration of Cicero's has traditionally been taken for granted as a 'commitment that lasted a life-time'.²² I take it that when Cicero claims allegiance to the 'sceptical

¹⁸ Aug. *C. Acad.* 3.41.

¹⁹ The Academic tradition at Athens, however, was already fragmented when war had driven Philo to Rome. Already rival pupils of Carneades, such as Metrodorus of Stratonicea and Clitomachus, were claiming to represent his views, and Antiochus' response to Philo's Roman Books was soon to follow as a dialogue entitled *Sosus*. The publication of the *Sosus* marked the final break between Antiochus and the sceptical Academy. Antiochus renounced all scepticism and put forward an alternative philosophical tradition of a combination of Stoic, Platonic and Aristotelian concepts. His arguments against Philo and Academic scepticism are presented in Cicero's *Lucullus*. Cf. Glucker (1978:13-31) for detailed discussion of Antiochus' secession from the sceptical Academy.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion of Philo's Roman innovations, see Glucker (1978:64-88).

²¹ Carneades maintained that ἐναργεία must provide the foundation of any dogmatic epistemology.

²² Ferguson (1962:102). Glucker (1988), however, has shown that from 79 BC onward, Cicero leaned toward the more doctrinaire teachings of Antiochus of Ascalon, without fully committing himself to the dogmatism of the 'Old Academy'.

Academy of Philo,' he refers to the sceptical school headed by Philo before his exile to Rome and before the publication of his Roman innovations. Cicero's enthusiasm for Academic scepticism probably waned with Philo's theoretical surrender to dogmatism, just when the strict scepticism of Philo's early days disappeared with the publication of his Roman Books. At that stage Cicero began to aspire towards a public career, and the purely analytical character of Academic scepticism had fewer advantages in a society where resolute action and firm convictions (the logical consistency of the Stoics, for instance) appeared more acceptable than a tendency towards open-mindedness and constant deliberation.

It is reasonable to assume that Cicero's outward shift of allegiance in favour of Antiochus' more popular philosophy was facilitated by the declining popularity of Philo's school.²³ In contrast to Philo, Antiochus enjoyed the patronage of L. Lucullus in the East. In the period of Cicero's career when he stood in the limelight as an orator and statesman, especially in the year of his consulship, one finds Cicero not in the least embarrassed to expound the doctrine of Antiochus' Academy (*Mur.* 63-64) and in the late fifties, long after his return from exile, he openly criticises the sceptical Academy (*Rep.* 3.9). It is not unreasonable to assume that Cicero, in this period, found useful the idea of the unsuitability for statesmen of theoretical philosophy (as it was perceived by Romans). Such a view would be consistent with the pervasive Roman perception that theoretical philosophy is remote from real life and practical affairs, and that the statesman can acquire moral philosophy (consistently considered the most important part of philosophy) by experience and example rather than by theoretical discussion.²⁴ Upon his return from exile, Cicero, intent on self-promotion,²⁵ seems to display Stoic sentiment in his depiction of his experience of exile. Claassen (1992) emphasises Cicero's reinterpretation of

²³ Cicero refers to the once flourishing Academy as *desertarum relictarumque* (*DND* 1.11). Cf. *DND* 1.16. Cicero does, however, find it difficult to distance himself totally from the sceptical school: '*quam quidem ego placare cupio, summovere non audeo*' (*Leg.* 1.39).

²⁴ Petrochilos (1974) indicates that although by the time the Romans began to be acquainted with philosophy, a shift of emphasis towards ethics had already taken place. Hence it was possible to contrast the comparative usefulness of natural philosophy with moral philosophy. This seems consistent with the Romans' perception of themselves as being both practically oriented and 'serious-minded' as opposed to the more theoretically inclined Greeks.

²⁵ Cicero's *post-reditum* speeches can be seen as evidence of his effort to develop an independent political position as broker of power between the senate and the by then divided triumvirate of Pompeius, Crassus and Caesar. If he had been more successful as power-broker, it may be conjectured that he could have re-established himself both in terms of social and political power.

himself as the noble Stoic sage who endured the pain of exile. I interpret Cicero's cloaking of himself with the Stoic *idea of enduring* the pain of exile as a rhetorical ploy, used mainly to boost his public image, regardless of the un-Stoic way in which he expresses his emotions.²⁶ Since Antiochus' 'Old Academy' held eloquence in high regard, and was thought to provide useful techniques for orators,²⁷ I find it not inconceivable that Antiochus' school, with its more tempered Stoic outlook, would have been less alienated by Cicero's modified application of Stoic ideas than would the adherents of strict Stoicism.

During the period of the fifties, after his return from exile and while he was writing *De republica* and *De legibus*, Cicero seems to have been far from regarding himself as a total political nonentity. From the 'letters' one may deduce that he was probably hoping that his views on Roman politics might still be taken into consideration by the leading political role-players. These dialogues, with their deliberately Platonic titles, show imitation and even traces of dogmatism; for instance, Cicero argues in *De republica* 1.2 that virtue can be achieved with much greater effect through practical statesmanship rather than through theoretical discussion. A similar sentiment is evident in Plato's *Gorgias*, where Callicles appeals to Socrates to give up philosophy, on the ground that men of good standing should rather interest themselves in the law and human conduct in general. Even Cicero's harsh criticism of the Academy as disrupter of order,²⁸ and his reference to Carneades, as someone who had a talent for misrepresentation,²⁹ seems to fit in with the form of politically correct behaviour requisite in the political atmosphere of the fifties. Assuming that Cicero's theory of the superiority of the mixed constitution derives from Stoic theory, it comes as no surprise to find certain qualities in Cicero's depiction of the ideal statesman corresponding with those of the model of the Stoic sage.³⁰ Such a combination of Stoic, early Academic and early Peripatetic elements had become the hallmark of Antiochus' school.

²⁶ Cf. Narducci (1997) on Cicero's un-Stoic awareness of the experience of enduring exile and loss of property.

²⁷ Cic. *Fin.* 5.7.

²⁸ '*Perturbatricem autem harum omnium rerum Academiam hanc ab Arcesila et Carneade recentem, exoremus ut sileat; nam si inuaserit in haec*' ... (*Leg.* 1.39).

²⁹ [Carneades] *qui saepe optimas causas ingenii calumnia ludificari solet* (*Rep.* 3.9).

³⁰ Cicero's ideal statesman is a man of prudence, guided by reason and in control of his emotions, while he constantly improves and examines himself (*Rep.* 2.67-69).

When Cicero left for Cilicia in 51 BC, he had no more promising political prospects to look forward to and while he was hovering on the outskirts of the political arena, he was free to reconsider his philosophical interests. The profound political changes of the years 51 - 46 BC must have influenced Cicero's philosophical thinking, as will be seen from the discussion below. From 46 BC onwards, Cicero's writings show him increasingly defending a sceptical position, especially with regard to the traditional sceptical views of Arcesilaus and Carneades. The entire *Lucullus*, for instance, can be seen as a debate in the tradition of the sceptical method of Carneades, where traditional scepticism is disputed against the doctrine of Antiochus.

Taking into consideration that Cicero, regardless of his friendship with Antiochus and his brother Aristus, never fully committed himself to Antiochus' doctrine, one cannot with certainty establish precisely when Cicero began to lose interest in the 'Old Academy'. It does, however, seem as if the realisation of his position as a political outsider impelled Cicero to leave practical and political motivation behind and to reconsider the value of philosophical inquiry for its own sake. Without the burden of active political involvement, Cicero had the opportunity and was free to explore rival philosophical doctrines in his effort to understand and explain what seemed to him political chaos.

The last years of Cicero's life mark the most vigorous period of philosophical writing in his literary *corpus*. Cicero's contribution to philosophy (sometimes disparagingly referred to as Cicero's notorious eclecticism) shows the combined influence of various philosophical doctrines. Donini (1988) points out that it was not unusual for ancient thinkers to maintain the idea that a philosophical statement could be the result of the combination of more than one notion that originated from different philosophers. At the same time these philosophers did not label their philosophy as 'eclecticism'.³¹ According to Donini the use of the verb ἐκλεγεῖν, to signify selecting the best from a group of things, does not appear to have established itself in philosophy before the Roman period,

³¹ When this term is used by ancient philosophers, it denotes a philosophy with the deliberate intention of selecting and combining various doctrines from different philosophical schools. Donini draws attention to the modern negative conviction that 'eclecticism, viewed as a general feature of a stage of ancient thought, was a very bad thing; that philosophy from the end of the second century BC, or from the first century BC to Plotinus, was bad, and that it was bad above all because it was eclectic' (18). This would not have been a consideration in the ancient world.

and it was then used in rare instances, and without the negative modern connotation. Donini rightly emphasises the inadequacy of the term ‘eclecticism’ as a generalisation for an ancient philosophical tradition which refused to submit to pre-fixed and supposedly authoritarian doctrines.

If his position is understood as that of a philosopher opposed to dogmatism, it is useful to accept the general designation of Cicero as an ‘eclectic’ thinker who examines and discusses general philosophical principles, without giving assent to anything except on the evidence of his own experience and reason.

The discussion above clearly indicates that Cicero’s philosophical practice had firm roots in Greek philosophical thought. Greek philosophical thought may likewise have influenced Cicero’s political theorising. Traces of cyclical thought (which has been called the ‘patrimony of Greek thought’), for instance, are evident in Book Two of Cicero’s *De republica*. This is reminiscent of Polybius’ theory of *anacyclosis*, historical recurrence. Polybius’ theory appears reminiscent of the kind of philosophical speculation found in Aristotle, Theophrastus, Dicaearchus and Panaetius, and shows eclectic use of sources similar to those found in Cicero. Whether or not Cicero, like Polybius, saw historical evolution in terms of political dynamism, will be the next topic of discussion.

6. The Roman concept of decline

6.1 Polybius and the cyclic pattern of constitutional change and decline

The most complete extant text of Hellenistic political theory to have survived from antiquity is Book 6 of Polybius' *Histories*. Working in Rome, Polybius embarked on political theorising for the practical purpose of explaining and predicting future political events. Accordingly, Polybius maintains that the application of his model of universal constitutional change and decline will enable the observer to advance a diagnosis which may be used to forecast future political success or failure. In chapter 4.11-13 of his *Histories*, Polybius asserts that anyone who has knowledge of how each constitutional form 'naturally arises and develops', will be able to see when, how and where 'growth, perfection, change and the end' of each constitution are likely to occur. Now Cicero, during the fifties, while he was composing his philosophical dialogues (of which the context evidently relates to his perception of the decline of the Republic and its attendant crisis of aristocratic authority), may to some extent have drawn on Polybius as a source for his second book of *De republica*.¹ It is common knowledge² that Cicero's account of the early history of Rome appears to agree with Polybius' perception of the coincidence of the early history of Rome with the earlier phases of his theory of *anacyclosis*. For the sake of clarity it is necessary to recap briefly the main principles of Polybius' political theory.

In his attempt to explain Rome's rise to power,³ Polybius inserted the history of the Roman state into the Greek cyclical framework that displays a characteristic pattern of growth (αὐξήσις), perfection (ἀκμή), change (μεταβολή) and end (τέλος). Within this

¹ Speculation to what extent Cicero was influenced by Polybius is however controversial. Cf. Taeger (1922) and Pöschl (1936:42-89).

² Cf. Brink and Walbank (1954), Podes (1991), Hahn (1995), Blösel (1998) for detailed discussions.

³ Polybius asserts that the main function of Book 6 is to explain Rome's success in attaining world domination (1.1.5, 39.8.7). He appears to have understood the normative historical process to contain 'shifts and turns of circumstances' (16.28.6) which includes alternations between success and failure, favourable and unfavourable conditions. The remarkable achievement of Rome, however, did not conform to these processes. Cf. Trompf (1979:88-93) for a full discussion of the 'beam-balance' notion in Greek thought.

cyclical pattern Polybius proposes that a biological pattern⁴ of birth, acme or maturity and decay underlies the world of political affairs as well as that of nature.⁵ This biological pattern is applied to the term *anacyclosis*, which denotes an invariable cycle of political constitutions which Polybius asserts is also due to nature.⁶ Both the biological pattern and the *anacyclosis* are called ‘natural’ (κατὰ φύσιν), and are considered by Polybius as ‘laws of nature’. By thus setting the world of politics against the background of a cycle of growth and decay, Polybius establishes a criterion for his prognostications. Polybius’ theory of the ‘evolution of constitutions’ appears to present a process of gradual change rather than revolutionary change, since the initial and final stages of each form is emphasised, and decline is assumed, immediately after a constitution is fully established. Accordingly, the final stage of each constitution merges into the next.

Polybius maintains that some relative stability can be achieved by a ‘mixed constitution’ (μικτή) where elements of kingship, aristocracy and democracy are combined. This is shown by Rome’s rise to world power as a consequence of the excellence of her constitution which he sees as the perfect example of μικτή. In contrast to the predictable change of Greek constitutional history, Rome, according to Polybius, had shown considerable stability, regardless of her corresponding development to the early stages of the *anacyclosis*, and had nevertheless succeeded in retarding the movement of the

⁴ Cicero refers to the Roman constitution in the biological terms of infancy, progress and maturity: ‘*nostram rem publicam vobis et nascentem et crescentem et adultam et iam firmam atque robustam ostendero*’ *Rep.* 2.3.4-6. Cf. Cicero’s depiction of Romulus as the commendable father, who did not merely establish the constitution of a new people, by leaving them in their cradle, but who continued to superintend their education until they had arrived at an adult, mature age: ‘*Videtisne igitur unius viri consilio non solum ortum novum populum neque ut in cunabulis vagientem relictum, sed adultum iam et paene puberem?*’ *Rep.* 2.21.1.

⁵ Polybius considered political affairs to be natural phenomena as defined by the *anacyclosis* and μικτή.

⁶ The cycle of constitutions within the *anacyclosis* follows a sequence of kingship and tyranny; aristocracy and oligarchy; democracy and mob rule, followed by a new cycle. This sequence of constitutional change is also evident in Cicero’s account of the early history of Rome in Book Two of his *De republica*: Roman monarchy which commenced with Romulus evolved into tyranny under Tarquinius Superbus, while the aristocratic republic became an oligarchy under the decemvirate. The idea of change into opposites is also found in Aristotle (1316a17), who contends that constitutions tend to transform into their opposites because human reactions often produce the converse, reducing all things to an unfavourable state of affairs. Cf. the view of Herodotos (7.16) that an immoderate degree of power ultimately brings downfall. In this vein Cicero (*Rep.* 1.44), asserts that a state experiencing imbalances of power is likely to undergo change towards a reactionary position directly opposed to what immediately preceded it.

political cycle. This, Polybius said, was shown by his account of the early history of Rome.⁷

It is not certain to what degree Polybius' political theory was influenced by his predecessors, for no one, single source for Polybius' theory has yet been identified.⁸ Polybius refers, among other philosophers, to Plato as one of his main sources (6.5.1). Precedents for the scheme of degeneration of forms of government are touched on by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1279a).⁹ One would speculate that Polybius had knowledge of Herodotos 3.80 - 82, where the constitutional forms of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy are also discussed. It is generally assumed that all these works of these authors may also have been known to Cicero (either directly or indirectly),¹⁰ as his frequent allusions to Plato, Aristotle, and Herodotos suggest.¹¹

⁷ Unfortunately, except for a few fragments, the main part of Polybius' discussion (in which he probably explained how Rome deviated from the closed political cycle and progressed to the relative stability of the mixed constitution), is not extant. It has become customary to call this lost section of Polybius' narrative about the early history of Rome the '*Archaeologia*'. Cf. Brink and Walbank (1954:108), Alonso-Núñez (1986:22), Blösel (1998:32). Walbank (1998:52) suggests that this convenient term is not without any ancient authority (as is commonly believed), quoting a passage in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 1.6), where Polybius is listed among other historians who had written about the early history of Rome.

⁸ Cf. Alonso-Núñez (1986), Hahn (1995).

⁹ Aristotle distinguishes between natural constitutions (where its members are equals and peers hold office in turns as a duty undertaken for the benefit of the ruled), and perverted constitutions (where men who desire personal profit want to stay in office continuously). Aristotle classifies natural constitutions, which consider the common interest, as 'correct' constitutions, and labels as 'wrong' or 'perverted' constitutions those constitutional forms which deviate from the natural constitutions in the sense that their aim is the personal interest of rulers. 'Wrong' constitutional forms, according to Aristotle, are despotic. According to the principle of rule by either the one, the few, or the many, aimed at the common interest (as being in accord with absolute justice), Aristotle distinguishes three subdivisions for each constitutional class: monarchy, aristocracy and 'polity' can be considered as 'correct' constitutions (1279a32), while tyranny, oligarchy and democracy constitute the corresponding 'perverted' constitutions (1279b4).

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter Two above note 13 for Cicero's possible acquaintance with the work of Theophrastus.

¹¹ Somewhat surprisingly, it appears by no means certain that Cicero had actually read Aristotle. Whereas both Runia (1989) and Fortenbaugh (1989) find no strong argument in favour of direct knowledge of Aristotle in Cicero, Barnes (1997) offers evidence which suggests not only that Cicero had consulted Aristotle's *Rhetorica*, but also that in all probability Aristotelian texts were available in or before Cicero's lifetime. Cicero does seem to share a similar view with Aristotle on the idea of constitutional change into opposites. See above note 6. A CD-ROM word count shows that Cicero refers to Herodotos in no fewer than 17 instances. In Cicero's philosophical writings alone (where a substantial part of Cicero's political theorising appears evident), combined references to the political works of both Aristotle and Theophrastus occur 27 times.

Cicero's account of Roman history in Book Two of *De republica* seems to end at about 450 BC, the year of the second decemvirate. This is also apparently the date which marks the conclusion of Polybius' account of the growth of Rome and her mixed constitution. Polybius apparently closes his narrative here because the Roman constitution, in his opinion, at that stage displayed all the features of a mixed constitution.¹² This combination of μικτή with *anacyclosis*¹³ appears to be reflected to some degree in Cicero's account of early Rome, where Cicero describes Romulus' willingness to share power with Tatius, king of the Sabines (*Rep.* 2.13). After Tatius' death, Romulus reigned by consultation with a quasi-senate of Sabines elected into the royal council. This, according to Cicero, was Romulus' attempt at a 'mixed' constitution, namely the adoption of the principle applied by Lycurgus in early Sparta (*Rep.* 2.42), that monarchical authority and royal power operate best in combination with the influence of the noblest citizens.

One may deduce from this that such a mixed constitution, with its power-sharing by the elite, could in Cicero's eyes forestall decay and corruption, since this appeared to be 'the general tendency with well-balanced constitutions' (*Rep.* 1.45). Cicero could therefore reason that with a proper understanding of the cyclical tendencies of constitutional change as tempered by a certain degree of power-sharing, Roman constitutional stability could be maintained indefinitely. Thus far Cicero's view of the Roman mixed constitution as a brake in a process of decay seems to resemble the Polybian model. However, here the resemblance ends. Cicero's use of human biological descriptive terminology for the Roman constitution deviates from the general Polybian terminology. His depiction of Rome (Book Two of *De republica*) in the traditional linear terminology of human birth, infancy, childhood, youth, maturity and old age recalls another model of recurrence, especially evident in Roman writing, often referred to as the 'body-state analogy'.¹⁴ The generally biological terms used by Cicero have a specifically human and psychological connotation and can be seen as Cicero's adaptation of traditional biological language into

¹² Cf. Brink and Walbank (1954) for a discussion of these features. Regents had some monarchic powers, the aristocracy deliberated on policy, the tribunate and *concilium plebis* had been conceded to the plebeians so as to avoid dangers inherent in an oligarchy without depriving the aristocracy of its decisive function.

¹³ Whether or not Polybius and Cicero applied the terms μικτή and *anacyclosis* in the same manner is however still a point of dispute.

¹⁴ Cf. Trompf (1979:188).

an analogy between human development and the political development of a society. It seems, however, also to adumbrate the triad of immortality available to great men. Cicero maintains that a state should be so constituted as to last for eternity: ‘... *debet enim constituta sic esse civitas, ut aeterna sit. Itaque nullus interitus est rei publicae naturalis ut hominis*’ (*Rep.* 3.34. *fr.* 2). This surely does not fit in with Polybius’ rigid biological pattern of growth and eventual decay.

It would seem then, that Cicero does not fully commit himself to Polybius’ model of *anacyclosis*. Instead, Cicero’s approach to cyclical constitutional patterns appears more flexible when he, for instance, refers to a constitutional form as usually (*solet*) undergoing apparent recurrences (*quasi circumitus*) in the changes and vicissitudes of public affairs,¹⁵ without endorsing a fixed pattern of change. Also, Cicero recalls the Polybian pattern of constitutional decline in the general terms of ‘what happens frequently (*saepe*)’, with this leaving more room for a description of change in political matters where exceptions to the rule have to be taken into account.¹⁶

Given Cicero’s natural avoidance of deterministic thinking, it is not surprising to see him turning to less restrictive models of recurrence such as that found in, for instance, Aristotle. Cicero’s description seems to recall the principle of ‘change into opposites’ (*in contraria vitia convertuntur*), a principle that also occurs in Aristotle’s *Politika*.¹⁷ Cicero links this concept with a notion of reversal by his quasi-Aristotelian generalisation that ‘anything in excess is usually changed into its opposite’.¹⁸

According to Polybius, Rome had achieved her acme with the success of the mixed constitution in a natural evolutionary process, and had (ever since 450 BC), in this process, avoided the third phase of the *anacyclosis* by withholding the possibility of any fundamental change in the constitution. The danger then, was, according to Polybius, still to come, for Rome had by no means reached the final stage of the *anacyclosis*.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Rep.* 1.45.

¹⁶ *Rep.* 1.69.

¹⁷ *Rep.* 1.69. See above note 6.

¹⁸ *Rep.* 1.45.

¹⁹ In this Polybius shows a sense of determinism, for the ‘closed circle’ of the ἀνακυκλωσις cannot be broken. The μικτή of Rome only functions as a temporary halt in the process of change.

The idea of decay is stressed by Polybius, apparently as an implicit warning to Rome, in several passages that envisage a decline in the Roman constitution because of the impending misrule inevitably inherent in the third phase of the *anacyclosis*.²⁰ Polybius leaves no room for doubt that deterioration follows as soon as world domination is acquired (1.64).²¹ This consciousness of decay in the Roman constitution, for Polybius, is evident in the change in moral standards that took place after the Second Punic War, when it seemed that the issue of deteriorating Roman morals had become part of the public debate of the period (31.25). Similarly, more than a century after Cicero, Cato's censorship is described by Plutarch (*Cat. Mai.* 19.4) as a measure to restore traditional values which had given way to the kind of extravagant living that ensued from the riches transported to Rome after the destruction of the Macedonian kingdom in 168 BC as also postulated by Polybius (31.25).²² From that time onwards, a conviction had existed among Romans that they had undisputed dominion over all. This conviction, together with the security and prosperity that resulted from Rome's conquests, accustomed Romans to a life of luxury and extravagance, leading to the trend of avarice and corruption, which Plutarch portrays Cato as denouncing.²³

²⁰ Polybius 6.4.11-13, 9.11-14, 51.3-8, 57.

²¹ Polybius also asserts that, as a general rule, states that achieve great success have a natural tendency to develop *hubris* and arrogance (6.18.5).

²² Livy 39.6,7, in accordance of the annalistic historical tradition, dates the beginning of Roman moral decline to 187 BC, after the Roman victory against Antiochus, when Manlius Vulso's army returned from Asia, laden with foreign spoils. In contrast, Sallust, in his very idealistic account of the history of the early second century, chooses (as does the Greek writer and philosopher Posidonius) the destruction of Carthage (146 BC) as the event that set in motion Roman moral degeneration. For Sallust, the removal of the *metus hostilis* (Rome's external threat *BC* 10.1, *BJ* 41.1, *Hist. fr.* 11,12), led to the breakdown of *virtus* and, eventually, of *concordia* (Sallust's over-stressed perception of the lack of serious friction which existed before 146 BC between the senate and the *populus*). Cf. Sallust *BJ* 10.6 '*concordia parvae res crescunt, discordia maxumae dilabuntur*'. Lintott (1972) has shown that these different versions and dating of the postulated beginning of Roman moral decline have developed from the propaganda of the Gracchan period, when some claimed that the destruction of Carthage gave the Romans the freedom to unleash their inherent vices (*avaritia* for instance) which resulted in the rise of ambitious demagogues and would-be tyrants. On the other side, victors like Scipio Aemilianus blamed Roman corruption on foreign contact during Roman military campaigns (Scipio, for instance, accused T. Gracchus of promising new landowners the property of Attalus III of Pergamum that was bequeathed to Rome, while G. Gracchus later ensured that the Pergamene revenues should be contracted out by *censoria locatio* at Rome. Cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.12 and Stockton (1979:153-6). Apparently these different views on the very beginnings of the mooted moral and political decline of Rome have become intermingled in the works of, for instance, later historians such as Sallust, Pliny (*NH* 33.150), Velleius Paterculus (1.1.1) and Florus (1.33).

²³ Cato *fr.* 93, 96, 185, 224-6.

As Polybius' main concern in his political theorising was the explanation of Rome's success (6.2.3, 8.2.3, 39.8.7), he does not elaborate fully on the subject of Roman decline. In contrast to Polybius, Cicero, in his depiction of the early history of Rome (displayed in *De republica* as an ideal to be emulated by his contemporaries, if only to halt, in the Polybian tradition, decline), has a great deal more to say on the subject of Roman moral decline.²⁴

6.2 The Roman concept of decline, discord and refoundation

As so often noted, Cicero in the late fifties depicted the Roman constitution as having achieved a form of political organisation superior to that of other constitutions.²⁵ His conservative spirit looked backward to past grandeur, while he sought to restore it, rather than to bring changes to the traditional Roman constitution. This lack of willingness to change traditional ways appears typically Roman. Evidence seems to indicate a recurrent pattern in the kind of Roman action taken in the past to curb moral decline. Roman attempts to check moral degeneration were often evident in severe censorships²⁶ instituted as measures to *return* the Roman state to the ancient values on which Rome was reputedly built.²⁷ According to Cicero 'admirable citizens had to give new weight to ancient customs and institutions' in Roman society (*Rep.* 5.1). In this respect Cicero's preface to Book Five of *De republica* stands as a testimony to the general Roman tendency of reaching back into the past as an effort to maintain the *status quo*. In this

²⁴ It was noted (Chapter Three note 3) that Cicero perceived the Gracchan era to be a significant turning point in Roman history. Moral degeneration (evident in an escalating incidence of corruption and indifference to public welfare) appears to be seriously considered by Cicero as the beginning of a downward trend in the political development of the Roman Republic. This perception is voiced by Laelius in the last part of his defence of justice: ' . . . *Ti. Gracchus, perseveravit in civibus, sociorum nominisque Latini iura neglexit ac foedera. Quae si consuetudo ac licentia manare coeperit latius imperiumque nostrum ad vim a iure traduxerit, ut, qui adhuc voluntate nobis oboediunt, terrore teneantur, etsi nobis, qui id aetatis sumus, evigilatum fere est, tamen de posteris nostris et de illa immortalitate rei publicae sollicitor, quae poterat esse perpetua, si patriis viveretur institutis et moribus*' (*Rep.* 3.41).

²⁵ *Rep.* 1.70.6-13: '*Sic enim decerno, sic sentio, sic adfirmo, nullam omnium rerum publicarum aut constitutione aut discriptione aut disciplina conferendam esse cum ea, quam patres nostri nobis acceptam iam inde a maioribus reliquerunt... optimam esse ostendam ...*'. Cf. *Rep.* 2.2, *Att.* 1.16.6, *Off.* 1.21.

²⁶ The censorships of, for instance, Cato (184 BC) and that of Scipio Aemilianus stand out for their severity as measures to check moral degeneration (Dio Cassius *fr.* 76, Val. Max. 6.4.2).

²⁷ Cf. *Off.* 2.27, *Cat.* 2.11 and Cicero's quotation of a fragment of Ennius that the Roman state consists of men and customs: '*Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque*' (*Rep.* 5.1).

passage Cicero's emphasis is on ancient morals which have become obsolete and forgotten, no longer supporting the state, which in itself has become nothing more than a 'faded painting', neglected by the Roman people, who neither renovated it nor cared for its preservation (5.2). Significant here is Cicero's vocabulary which rings with Roman nostalgia (*renovare, curavit, servaret*), but lacks any indication of possible new points of departure in any attempt to confront the problem.²⁸

Equally familiar is the concept that the strong Roman tendency to equate political ability and achievement with virtue had always encouraged the idea of moral superiority in Roman leaders. The Roman concept of moral excellence (*virtus*) represented the qualities that enabled men to achieve political greatness and manifested itself as an aristocratic ideal in the service of the state.²⁹ The decline of Roman *virtus* therefore implied for Romans a corresponding political degeneration. This idea is well-expressed by Sallust, who reinterprets the aristocratic ideal of *virtus* as the functioning of *ingenium* (man's inborn talent or nature) to achieve *egregia facinora* in order to attain *gloria* by the exercise of *bonae artes*.³⁰ One may deduce from the tone of Cicero's attack on Piso (*Pis.* 2) that for him too, as for other *novi homines*, *virtus* and not ancestry was the proper criterion for a person's worthiness for all office and recognition of his *nobilitas*. For him this was the original concept of *nobilitas*. According to this criterion, *novi homines* were entitled to claim to share with the *nobiles* the same 'studia et artes' in their way toward true *nobilitas*.

²⁸ 'Nostra vero aetas cum rem publicam sicut **picturam** accepisset egregiam, sed iam **evanescentem vetustate**, non modo eam coloribus eisdem, quibus fuerat, **renovare neglexit**, sed ne id quidem **curavit**, ut formam saltem eius et extrema tamquam liniamenta **servaret**. **Quid enim manet ex antiquis moribus**, quibus ille dixit rem stare Romanam? quos ita **oblivione obsoletos** videmus, ut non modo **non colantur, sed iam ignorentur**' (*Rep.* 5.2). The passage resonates with pessimism. It may even be suggested that Cicero's constant pre-occupation with the past is representative of an image of Roman tradition created for the Romans by themselves within a treadmill of tradition from which escape was neither possible nor desired.

²⁹ The aristocratic ideal, defined as *virtus*, lay in the pursuit of *gloria* through the service of the state and implied a certain standard of conduct in the pursuit of the ends it enjoined. Its order of priorities were: first, the state, then the family and last, the individual. Cf. Earl (1961:26-27).

³⁰ Cf. Sallust's prologues to the *BC* and *BJ* for Sallust's definition of *virtus*. *Ingenium* for Sallust forms the basis of distinction between *virtus* and *ambitio* which also proposes as its end *gloria*, but uses (so Sallust) the wrong method for reaching a good end. True *virtus* for Sallust demands *ingenium bonum* expressed in *bonae artes*. See Earl (1961 *passim*) for a comprehensive discussion of Sallust's political thought.

Cicero, like Sallust, could, through his redefinition of the concept of Roman *virtus*³¹ shift the blame for the mooted Roman moral degeneration to the Romans themselves.³² If *virtus* was inborn in all, and no longer merely the function of an accident of birth into an aristocratic family, Romans not born to the aristocracy were equally to blame if society at large no longer exhibited pristine *virtus*.

If decline naturally leads to its opposite, it follows that, for a thinker within this tradition, once he admits to this decline, the state is capable of regeneration. For him, this can only occur through refoundation. Whereas Greek historians recognised a natural pattern of growth and decline of individual states in succession only (one following upon the other), Romans perceived their state as solely capable of experiencing decline and resurgence through 'refounding'. This concept of refounding corresponds with Livy's idea that a society which experiences political and moral decline could be reformed through a process of refoundation.³³

Forsythe (1996) *contra* Miles (1995) observes that the notion of Roman decline and refounding was already in existence before Livy wrote. Ennius' reference to Q. Fabius Maximus Verrucosus, for instance, indicates the notion of restoring the state in a time of peril³⁴ and Cato, in his *Origines* (so Cic. *Rep.* 2.2), depicted the kings of Rome as a series of 'founders'. Cicero's quotation (*Sest.* 123) from Accius' *Brutus* indicates, according to Forsythe, that already by the second century BC, the legendary King Servius Tullius was regarded as the true founder of republican liberty through his institution of the centuriate organisation.³⁵

³¹ Earl (1961) has shown that the Roman concept of *virtus* became in certain instances merely a conventional laudatory formula and that Cicero's strengthening of *virtus* by the use of adjectives is indicative of the decline in the original force of the concept. See below for Cicero's broad definition of the exhibitors of *virtus* as '*boni*'.

³² Traditionally Romans blamed the decline of *virtus* on contact with Greek culture, which resulted in wealth and its by-product *avaritia*, and the love of power.

³³ In book V of *A.u.c.* Livy indicates that Roman disregard for piety resulted from avarice, and that their traumatic experience of Gaulish occupation and loss of material well-being returned them to their proper worship of the gods, a piety which was re-established by Camillus' 'refounding of the city'.

³⁴ Ennius *Ann.* 12.363: '*Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem*'.

³⁵ *Sest.* 123.10: '*Tullius, qui libertatem civibus stabiliverat.*'

Given Cicero's frequent quotation of Ennius and his various allusions to Cato, one may assume that these literary influences strengthened Cicero's susceptible attitude to the Roman idea of discord (as equated with decline), followed by a constitutional refounding of the state. It is significant that Cicero involves Scipio Aemilianus (famous for both the destruction of Carthage and the concomitant strengthening of Rome) in his political dialogue by setting the dramatic date of *De republica* at the beginning of the era of revolution, just after the death of Tiberius Gracchus, at a time when the Roman state was again in need of regeneration.

In 51 BC, with Pompeius out of domestic office, leaving the *boni* ³⁶ in control of the senate, Cicero took the opportunity afforded by the *Zeitgeist* and the general atmosphere of relative freedom he experienced to publish *De republica*. In the light of the fact that the *boni* at this time regarded Cicero with new acclaim,³⁷ Cicero could hope that his views set out in *De republica* would be favourably received.³⁸ The publication of *De republica* could be seen as Cicero's manifestation of a self-imposed duty to serve the state through an attempt to initiate its restoration by recalling a more balanced era of power-sharing in the Roman constitution. With this he appeals to the aristocratic ideal (supposedly still alive among some members of the senate) to show the appropriate concern for the well-being of the state. Against the background of the general Polybian model of constitutional decline, Cicero's decision to publish the document at this time may thus be seen as an effort to stem an all-too-natural process of political decay evident in the political reality of the Roman society. This will be expanded upon in the next chapter.

However, within the general atmosphere of political strife and turbulence of the late Republic, when a return to traditional values was being urged as a remedy for political anarchy, the realities of the tension which existed between the practice and the theory of politics loomed larger than ever for statesmen. Given the Greek acceptance of the

³⁶ 'Boni' is a term coined by Cicero for a wider political grouping than the narrow aristocratic alliances general in the politics of his day. This stemmed from Cicero's reinterpretation of *virtus*.

³⁷ Cicero won their favour during the trial of the tribune Bursa, an adherent of Pompeius, with whom Cicero clashed in his role as prosecutor.

³⁸ Even Sallust after his expulsion regarded the senate as a bulwark of the state: '*nam ceteris salva urbe tantum modo libertas tuta est: qui per virtutem sibi divitias decus honorem pepererunt, ubi paulum inclinata res publica agitari coepit, multipliciter animus curis atque laboribus fatigatur*' (*Ad Caesarem de Re Publ* 2.10.5).

philosophical maxim that ‘practice never squares with theory’ (Plato *Rep.* 473a), could Cicero hope for Roman society to bring forth Roman ‘answers’ in the sense of the Platonic remedy that ‘those we now call rulers should truly become philosophers’ (473d)? This brings us to a consideration of respectively the Greek and Roman traditions regarding the compatibility of philosophy with politics.

7. Theory and practice vs practice and theory

The problem of reconciling the life of the philosopher with that of a politician continued to present itself in the discussions of Plato's successors. As we saw above, the discourse on the tension between the βίος θεωρητικός and the βίος πρακτικός was still very much alive in the later Roman Republic, especially when political strife provided the impetus for a philosophical revival of Platonic ideas as represented in, for instance, the teachings of Antiochus of Ascalon.¹ Antiochus appears to have taken an interest in the teachings of Polemo (head of the Academy 313-270 BC),² who had emphasised that philosophers could guide the state. From a letter to Atticus (2.16.3), we may deduce that Cicero seems to have been at least acquainted with the writings of the Peripatetic Dicaearchus, from whose 'Lives of the philosophers'³ Cicero took examples for the practice of the βίος πρακτικός. Is it then possible to infer that the Roman mind in general, and Cicero's in particular, during the late Republic was open to the acceptance of the idea of the philosophical adviser as guide to the ruler, perhaps even the suggestion that the ruler who accepts the philosopher's advice might easily become a student of philosophy and eventually progress to a similar status as 'philosopher-king'?

Before attempting to answer this question, we need briefly to reconsider the Greek theory that tended to regard the 'good king' as an exceptionally wise and virtuous ruler opposed to the 'evil tyrant', and to consider such egregious kingship as the highest aim to attain in life (Polyb. 6.4).⁴

7.1 Rulers vs philosophers: the Greek ideal of the ruler as benefactor

The Greek philosophical trend, ever since Plato, was to aim at teaching rulers to know true virtue (ἀρετή). To the Greeks, kingship (βασιλεία)⁵ could only be justified as the

¹ Cf. Cicero's letter to Atticus (9.4) as an example of a debate in Greek and Latin as a part of a series of philosophical *theses* on tyranny.

² Cic. *Luc.* 131.

³ Early Platonists and Aristotelians illustrated the ideal life of the philosopher in brief narratives, that took the form of biographies and epistolary narratives to argue the case for or against the practical role of philosophy. Cf. Konstan and Mitsis (1990:275).

⁴ Cf. Polybius' praise of kingship 6.6-7.

⁵ Aristotle appears to differentiate between βασιλεία, an acceptable form of kingship, and μοναρχία, like tyranny, a disreputable form of sole rule (*Pol.* 1312b38).

rule of a supremely good person, 'the good king', who was guided by reason, showing mildness, mercy and benevolence to his subjects. Aristotle, for instance, declared that when a single individual is found whose virtue is outstanding, he deserves to be called an absolute king (*Pol.* 1288a15). According to Greek theory, such an outstanding individual could become king on account of his superiority in virtue, or deeds of virtue (1310a39, 1310b31), and should, as a protector of the community, aim at what is good (τὸ καλόν) in the interest of his subjects (*Pol.* 1310b40, *NE* 1160b).⁶

According to Plato *Rep.* 363b-c, the Greek idea of the perfect king taking care of his subjects, and ruling justly to their advantage, can be traced back to Hesiod and Homer, who both associate the benefits resulting from virtuous rule with heavenly rewards.⁷ Plato envisages rulers or guardians who possess the greatest skill to *watch* over the community, who truly *care* for the community to the *advantage of the community* (*Rep.* 412b), and who always do what they think is *best for the community* (413). The pastoral image present in Hesiod and Homer seems to colour Plato's ideal vision of 'rulers as shepherds of the community' (*Rep.* 440d),⁸ and even that of Xenophon, who, in his praise for the Persian king Cyrus, draws a similar parallel between a good ruler and a good shepherd, thus echoing a theory apparently propagated by Cyrus 'that the duties of a good shepherd and that of a good king were very similar: for a good king ought, in the same way as the good shepherd tends to the well-being of his flock, to make his people and cities happy'.⁹

Xenophon's portrayal of kingship seems to fit in with the generally-held Greek theory which prescribed that it is the duty of a good king to do as much good as possible for his

⁶ The idea of rulers as protectors, saviours and benefactors of the state is also found in the Ciceronian conjoining of *rectores* and *conservatores* (*Rep.* 6.13.8). Similar conjoining is evident in other works of Cicero (*Dom.* 26.8, *Har.* 58.3, *Sest.* 37.10, 53.14, 98.5, 116.11, 138.4, 141.5, 146.4, *Vat.* 7.4, *Pis.* 23.20, 52.5, *Mil.* 73.6, 80.5, *Phil.* 2.31, 2.51.11, 3.14.12, 3.28.3, 4.8.5, *Leg.* 2.6.5, *Fin.* 5.62.10, *Fam.* 12.3.2.4, *Att.* 8.9a.1.11, 9.10.3.9) where he associates the concepts of either *rector*, *custos*, *auctor* or *defensor* with the idea of saving or preserving the state, including his own claim to fame in this respect.

⁷ Hesiod *WD* 232, Homer *Od.* 19.109. Cf. Plato *Phaedo* and Cic. *Rep.* 6.25, 26.

⁸ Plato's Trasymachus (*Rep.* 343a) speaks of a ruler or shepherd of the people, who tends the flock so that he might shear it. Cf. *Rep.* 345c-d, *Minos* 318a, 321c, *Politicus* 275b and *Theaetetus* 174d, Xen. *Mem.* 3.2.1 for both negative and positive references to rulers as 'shepherds'. The image of the ruler as 'shepherd' is absent in Ciceronian literature and may suggest a more realistic Roman approach to politics. Cf. Suetonius' ironic reference in this regard: '*praesidibus onerandas tributo prouincias suadentibus rescipsit* [Tiberius] *boni pastoris esse tondere pecus, non deglubere*' (*Vit. Tib.* 32.2.12).

⁹ Xen. *Cyropaedia* 8.2.14. Cf. Xen. *Mem.* 3.2.2 'a good king should make his subjects happy'.

subjects¹⁰, and also held the additional promise of recompense (i.e. the love of his subjects) that could culminate in an ideal kingdom where a king could try to make ‘all his men like himself’ (*Mem.* 3.2.2).

This line of Greek thought seems to have struck a harmonic chord in Roman political thinking. This tone rang forth as a new Roman medley of political theory, composed and preserved in Latin literature, as we shall see, by Cicero.

7.2 Roman adaptation: description, not prescription

In contrast to the traditional Greek view of a good king, Romans sharing the conviction of the superiority of their Roman political and moral tradition showed less reverence for the cardinal virtues ascribed by Greek philosophy to kingship.¹¹ In this respect Cicero proves himself the exception to the rule among Roman statesmen in his efforts to reconcile Greek theory and Roman practice. Although he makes a clear distinction in *De republica* between Panaetius’ field of philosophy and the political domain of Scipio (1.15), in *De Natura Deorum* (written in 45 BC) he does seem to consider himself as one who has acted in both private and public life as a person taught by reason who acts in accordance with his own philosophical beliefs (1.7).¹²

¹⁰ *Agesilaos* 7.1. Cicero seems to have had knowledge of Xenophon’s encomium *Agesilaos* (*Cic. Fam.* 5.12.7) where Xenophon treats king Agesilaos II as an *exemplum* of a moral-political thesis about good leadership, where the quality of *andragathia* (manly virtue) enables a man to be a good leader and ruler. Given the frequency of references to Xenophon in Cicero’s philosophical works and his letters (34x), it seems not unlikely that he might also have been familiar with Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (where Xenophon’s Socrates pictures tyranny as hell on earth) as well as his treatise on tyranny, a supposed dialogue on the nature of sole rule (the only extant classical work on tyranny) between Hiero the Tyrant and Simonides, the praise poet of Ceos. Cf. Polybius’ approval of Hiero, who, during his long reign, conferred many benefactions upon his own people (*Polyb.* 1.16.11, 7.8.6).

¹¹ Even though kingly virtue justified absolute rule, Romans found it difficult to accept the idea of absolute rule without accountability which formed the theoretical basis for Greek kingship. Both Plato and Aristotle placed their supreme rulers above the law, ruling in the interest of the state. Aristotle’s approach may, from a Roman point of view, have seemed more realistic in the sense that the good ruler (so Aristotle) deserved absolute power in return for his contribution to the common good. Such a transactional approach would also have had much in common with the Roman concept of *do ut des*. It may also imply that the Aristotelian approach distinguished between politics and philosophy, but without finding them incompatible with another.

¹² Cicero discusses the prevalent negative Roman attitude to philosophy in *De finibus*. Cicero was certainly well aware of the dichotomy that existed between philosophy and the political conduct of Roman statesmen.

Yet in Cicero's extant work one finds virtually no evidence to suggest in Roman terms the existence of the concept of 'the good king' as found in Greek theory.¹³ Instead, Cicero makes frequent use of the word *tyrannus* (as opposed to the good ruler),¹⁴ a Romanised form of the Greek word τύραννος which developed from a neutral synonym for the Greek βασιλεύς (a king) to a negatively charged word for an autocrat.¹⁵

Roman adaptations of Greek tragedies introduced the Greek tyrant in its negative sense to Roman audiences as one who seizes power in an unconstitutional way,¹⁶ at the same time displaying all the evil characteristics of the oppressive ruler as he was depicted in Roman political invective and rhetoric.¹⁷ Cicero's *De inventione* features the first extant example of a rhetorical exercise with the tyrant as subject and may have been influenced by Cicero's early exposure to the rhetorical exercises with their Greek settings imposed by Apollonius Molon of Rhodes.¹⁸ Cicero often couples *rex* with *tyrannus* as Roman terms of abuse which, from a Roman perspective, exclude any possible positive association

¹³ For instance, the Greek term for the good king, βασιλεύς is not to be found in any of Cicero's extant work, although he frequently uses Greek terms. Cf. *Rep.* 2.45-49 for Cicero's definition of a tyrant. The nearest Cicero comes to a less negative depiction of a *rex* is his allusion to Servius Tullius, called a *rex optimus* murdered by the order of Tarquinius Superbus '*rex ille*' (2.45.6). In July 57, after his return from exile, Cicero (*Sest.* 123) relates a scene from a play by Accius, the *Brutus* (performed at the time of Cicero's exile), where Servius Tullius is mentioned as one who had liberated the people. This was probably a deliberate association of the "founder of the republic" with himself made in retrospect, to enhance his portrayal of his past actions.

¹⁴ The tyrant, depicted in the negative sense of a ruler in power of the worst possible constitutional form of monarchy, features prominently in the works of both Plato and Aristotle. Cf. Aristotle's definition of a tyrant (*NE* 1160b): 'a tyrant is the exact opposite of a good king, for the tyrant pursues his own good and not the interest of his subjects'.

¹⁵ Cf. Parker (1998) for an excellent discussion of the introduction of the word τύραννος into the Greek language in a positive sense to serve as a synonym for βασιλεύς, ἄναξ, πρότασις and σκηπτοῦχος, all denoting a legitimate king. For discussions on early Greek tyranny see Cawkwell (1995), and for post-classical tyranny Kennell (1997). Waters (1971:7, 11, 16-40) has indicated that at the time when Herodotos was writing, a fixed concept of Greek tyranny did not yet exist and that Herodotos' reasons for inclusion of references to the institution of tyranny (3.80, 5.92) are mainly for historical purposes relating to the main theme of his narration of the conflict between Persia and Greece. Unlike Cicero (*Off.* 3.29), Herodotos does not, for instance, make use of an outstandingly cruel tyrant such as Phalaris for moral illustration. His use of the word τύραννος is still a neutral term used only as a synonym for βασιλεύς and μοναρχός. The first consistent distinction in Greek historiography between Greek 'tyrants' as 'bad' and 'kings' as 'good' comes from Thucydides (Parker 164).

¹⁶ Both Ennius' play *Thyestes* and Accius' *Atrius* had tyrants as prominent stage characters. Cf. Cic. *DND* 3.68.8, 18, 3.71.12, *Off.* 1.97, 2.23, 3.106, for references to Accius' *Tereus*, Cic. *Att.* 16.2.3, *Phil.* 1.36.

¹⁷ Cf. Dunkle (1967, 1971) for the role of the rhetorical tyrant in Roman political invective.

¹⁸ Dunkle (1971:13).

with ‘good kingship’.¹⁹ The nearest Cicero comes to praise of an autocratic ruler, is in *De officiis* where he mentions Aratus of Sicyon, calling him a great *statesman* who actually deserved to have been a Roman: ‘*O virum magnum dignumque, qui in re publica nostra natus esset!*’ (*Off.* 2.82-83). Cicero positions Aratus as antithesis to Sulla and Caesar, and, significantly, refrains from calling him a tyrant, rather emphasising that he has *liberated* the community from oppressive tyranny.²⁰ This depiction of Aratus, the wise and admirable Greek who considered it his duty to work in the interest of all in his community,²¹ is strongly reminiscent of Plato’s *Politicus* 276b, where ideal kingship is defined as ‘the art of caring for the whole community’.

7.3 Cicero’s attempt to compromise

The Cicero to be encountered in his philosophical treatises might well have considered himself as fulfilling the role of philosophical adviser, the object of his advice vacillating intermittently over time, from the senate as a body, to Caesar, to Pompeius.²² Yet he is primarily a creative author and these treatises are works of the imagination. His comparison of himself to Demetrius of Phaleron, a ruler who was once able to unite theory and practice as ruler of Athens, seems to suggest that Cicero, as practical statesman, has discovered and is able to put into practice what philosophers preach about statesmanship, since philosophers of the past ‘failed to have accomplished anything practical and men of action were clumsy in exposition’ (*Rep.* 1.13).²³

¹⁹ *Verr.* 3.115, 4.123, 5.68, *Balb.* 13.6, *Deiot.* 15.9, 33.4, 34.3, *Top.* 85.3, *Rep.* 1.45, 1.66, 1.68, 2.47, 2.48, 2.49, 3.23, *Tusc.* 2.52, 5.109, *Fam.* 15.1.6, *Ep. Brut.* 12.3.3, *Ep. Oct.* 8.13. Even Cicero himself fell victim to the appellation *rex*, cf. *Sull.* 21, 48, *Att.* 1.16.10, *Fam.* 7.24.1, *Vat.* 23.

²⁰ Cf. Polybius’ advocacy of the ideology of benevolent ruler-action in his discussion of Aratus as commendable statesman (2.40, 43, 45).

²¹ ‘*At ille Graecus, id quod fuit sapientis et praestantis viri, omnibus consulendum putavit, eaque est summa ratio et sapientia boni civis, commoda civium non divellere atque omnis aequitate eadem continere.*’ Aratus’ course of conduct is thus shown to be *prudent* and *not harmful*. This is reminiscent of Cicero’s justification of his own conduct during the trial of Catiline (cf. Cicero’s address to Catiline 1.5) where numerous *exempla* of justified murders as measures to protect the state from harm are dished out as action taken against past plotters of tyranny in Rome.

²² Cicero attempted to write to Caesar in the vein of both Aristotle’s and Theopompus’ advice to Alexander (*Att.* 12.40, 13.28).

²³ This work was presumably composed during 54-51, when Cicero’s power was already minimal. He seems to be combining reminiscences of his practical political influence of 63 with his view of himself as contemporary theorist.

The attempt to bridge the existing divide between philosophy and Roman politics is made by Cicero in *De republica* when he tries to persuade his audience that politics is a 'science' and that it is compatible with philosophy when it is united in what Cicero describes as the 'best government of the state'. Philosophy as it was practiced in Rome of the fifties BC, with its emphasis on wise and virtuous men striving towards eternal truth (the Epicureans, even the Stoics of the era), showed little concern for practical politics and government affairs.

A similar situation, according to Cicero, existed in 129 BC, when philosophy at Rome was still recently established and had little impact on ambitious politicians. He places the dialogue in this era.²⁴ It would seem that Cicero uses the events of 129 BC, when Rome experienced a period of political upheaval, to reflect the political circumstances of contemporary Roman society where leading politicians like Caesar and Pompeius showed disregard for any philosophical guidance which could interfere in the pursuit of their respective political interests.²⁵ Cicero's Scipio (the statesman Scipio Aemilianus) takes on the responsibility of trying to persuade his audience, consisting mainly of philosophers, toward a concern for active politics.²⁶ In his depiction of the best regime and his description of the 'art' of ruling, he relates the history of actual states, thereby leaving theoretical discussion behind in order to treat statesmanship as a 'science' based on comparison of different states. The account given by 'Scipio' derives from 'his own political experience', without deviating much from similar discussions by Greek philosophers on the same subject. By employing philosophical language in his defence of the art of ruling in different states, Cicero's Scipio apparently implies that philosophy can be of use to statesmen who, as wise and virtuous men, are able to combine statesmanship with the knowledge of nature. The successful blending of philosophy and politics may then lead to the cultivation of virtue in a new political context, so that *political virtue*, through the guidance of philosophy, could become the highest *virtue as service to the*

²⁴ This dialogue represents not so much the opposition of different philosophical schools as the opposition between politics and philosophy.

²⁵ Both Caesar and Pompeius seem to have ignored Cicero's attempts to guide them towards political philosophy.

²⁶ In all this the reader should remember that this is a rhetorical ploy and not reportage. Cicero's 'Scipio' is a figment of the author who uses the character to portray a particular stance, which may not even have been Cicero's own.

state in the skilful hands of a new breed of Roman politicians, of which the *philosophical statesman* as *outstanding politician* will emerge to be rewarded with a place in eternity.

Cicero's creation of the concept *rector rei publicae* (*Rep.* 2.51) offers a Roman adumbration of the Greek 'good king' as ruler or director. This *rector* is to be identified with Cicero's *optimus civis* described throughout *De republica* as a ruler who applies his experience, knowledge and efforts to government. With this phrase *rector rei publicae* Cicero seems to have formulated the Roman concept of the supreme statesman or politician,²⁷ as approximately similar to not just the 'ideal citizen' described in the works of Plato and Aristotle, but also to the exemplar of the Polybian statesman, from whom is expected the duty and responsibility to act positively in the interest of the state.²⁸ In this Cicero may even perhaps indirectly be suggesting that he himself has successfully progressed from mere practical politician to a Roman equivalent of the philosopher-king, but now with emphasis on his role as philosophical guide to the state. His picture of what he believes Roman society in the past has been is redrawn to show what it could become. In *De republica* then, it would seem that Cicero employs literature not only to reflect the existing tension between practice and theory relating to the traditional political and philosophical divide that marked Roman society, but to intervene in such a society in order to save it.

So much, then, for the moment, on Cicero's theoretical stance. We need now to move forward to an examination of Cicero's theorising at work in the practical sphere, in his relationships with his overtly politically-minded peers. We start with the year 51, when

²⁷ Given the fact that pre-Ciceronian Latin lacked a word describing a politician as such, Powell (1994:18-29) argues a strong case that the *rector rei publicae* mentioned among other professional people in *De oratore* 1.211 (written closely in time to *De republica*), is intended simply as the name of a profession, that of the politician or statesman. By including the term with other examples of the professions, such as lawyers, musicians, poets and philosophers, as well as explicitly making the effort to define the phrase *rector rei publicae*, Cicero appears to introduce the concept of politics as "professional occupation" in a society where members of the Roman upper class participating in the *res publica* did not regard themselves as practising a profession *per se*. The Ciceronian idea of the *rector* as statesman, according to Powell, culminates in the concluding part of *De republica*, the *Somnium Scipionis*, where the good *rectores rei publicae* are awarded a place in heaven. This is strikingly similar to Plato's *Phaedo* (82a-b), where those who excelled in politics are rewarded with the best seats in heaven.

²⁸ Cicero refers to Aristotle's work in *Fam.* 5.11, *Qfr.* 3.5. Although Cicero himself does not refer to Plato's *Politicus*, it seems as if Plato's πολιτικός or ideal ruler, as someone who knows the art of governing, is very near to Cicero's depiction of the ideal politician. Cf. Polybius' praise of, for instance, republican statesmen, such as Scipio Africanus, Scipio Aemilianus, and even Hannibal (23.12-14, 36.8).

Cicero's term of governorship in Cilicia lent him that distance which increasingly led to disenchantment with the major political players at the time. Although removed in space from the hub of political activity, Cicero was very much involved in both observation and commenting on what was being conspired in Italy. His correspondence from a distance may be designated as informal theorising about the political practices of others at Rome.

II. MEDIIS IN REBUS

From a distance

8. Cicero's period of governorship in Cilicia

8.1 Caelius, Cicero and Milo: '*homines magni*' 52 BC

Caelius Rufus is a constant in Cicero's correspondence from Cilicia. His role as both reporter of events and sounding-board for Cicero's judgement of these events was important for Cicero at the time, and for us when we trace developments in Cicero's political thought.

The relationship between Cicero and Caelius probably originated in 66 BC when Caelius' father took him to Rome to start his rhetorical training under the tutelage of Cicero and Crassus. During the years 66 to 63 Caelius proved himself an apt pupil with a talent for oratory, a skill for which he was recognised and praised by his tutors. After this apprenticeship, Caelius, after a short spell of political intriguing with Catiline in 63,¹ left for the province of Africa in the company of the ex-consul Q. Pompeius Rufus, the new governor under whose guidance he was supposed to become acquainted with provincial administration. Caelius made a success of his task as aide to Pompeius and was accordingly praised.²

On his return to Rome in 60 BC, his education considered complete, Caelius embarked on establishing a public career for himself. His successful prosecution of Antonius Hybrida (Cicero's co-consul in 63, accused of corruption) in 59 BC not only brought him instant fame,³ but also partial estrangement from Cicero, who had lost the case for the defence to his former pupil. Caelius, now confident of making a success in public, started off by

¹ Caelius had been on friendly terms with Catiline since 67 and although he favoured Catiline during the election campaign for 63 (Cic. *Cael.* 12-14), his involvement with the conspiracy cannot with certainty be proven. During Caelius' trial his accusers could not produce concrete evidence against him and had to resort to vague accusations. Any form of involvement with Catiline, even based on hearsay, ran contrary to the interests of both the '*boni*' and the senate, making their acceptance of Caelius less easy.

² Cic. *Cael.* 73, Val. Max. 4.2.7.

³ Caelius' piece of vituperation against Antonius is much praised by Quintilian (4.2.123-4, 6.3.39, 10.1.115, 12.10.11), while his depiction of Antonius in a drunken stupor matches Cicero's caricature of Piso six years later. On Caelius' success as an orator cf. Cic. *Brut.* 273, Tac. *Dial.* 21.3, Vell. 2.68, Frontin. *Aqu.* 75.

renting a house on the Palatine (in the centre of Roman affairs) from P. Clodius (Cicero's chief *inimicus*)⁴ and chose a lifestyle of fast living by frequenting the Clodian social circle. In 56 BC, however, facing five formal charges which were probably instigated by the Clodii,⁵ Caelius was prosecuted for *vis* and forced to resume his relationship with his former tutors, Cicero and Crassus, both acting on his behalf for the defence council. After his acquittal Caelius was free to pursue his political career.

The period from 53 onwards which was marked by political turmoil in Rome coincides with the start of Caelius' active participation in Roman political affairs and his close association with both Cicero and Milo.⁶ From Cicero's letter (*Att.* 5.13.1), written in 51 BC, the impression is created that for Cicero, the year 52 seemed to mark the beginning of a new era in Roman politics. Here, more than a year later, Cicero (now with hindsight) refers to the 'battle of Bovillae' (which led to the death of Clodius in 52)⁷ as the onset of a renewed process of hostilities. The encounter between Clodius and Milo has by

⁴ Cic. *Att.* 2.21.6, *Mil.* 78, *Fam.* 7.2.

⁵ This animosity between Caelius and the Clodii probably started shortly after Caelius had ended his two-year affair with P. Clodius' sister Clodia, and it was still apparent in 54 BC, when Caelius was prosecuted by the Atratinii and Pola Servius (*Qfr.* 2.12.2). Although Caelius was tried on political grounds the charges were mainly prompted by social reasons. Cf. Austin (1988) Appendix V, 152-5 for discussion of the formal charges brought against Caelius.

⁶ Crassus' defeat and death in 53 on his Parthian expedition marked the end of the pact formed between the triumviri of 59. Effective propaganda had widened the distance between Caesar, Pompeius and their followers, and had left the city in a state of virtual anarchy. There being no urban praetor in office to select jurors, not even the courts were functioning and the senate had to resort to the commissioning of Pompeius to defend the state as proconsul. He succeeded in putting an end to the current anarchy and that permitted the election of magistrates for the rest of 53.

⁷ Clodius died in the vicinity of Bovillae, a small and relatively unimportant town in Latium that was especially renowned for its ancient history of sacred ritual (*Mil.* 85), including the cults of the *gens* Iulii. Supported by his depiction of a dying Clodius near the altar of the Bona Dea (so Cicero *Mil.* 86), Cicero could imply that his death was in a way divine justice, a penalty that was due not only for his violation of the Bona Dea rites in 62, but also for his arrogance in desecrating the sacred surroundings of Bovillae, to which he had brought his street fight. One may even suspect a possible word play on both the name of Bovillae as derived from *bos*, and *bovillus* as an abusive term for Clodius, seen here as 'fighting' it out very un-aristocratically, in a cattle-stall. Cf. *Har. Resp.* 5.11-12 where Cicero with great relish, remarks: '*Quid enim hunc [Clodium] persequar, pecudem ac beluam, pabulo inimicorum meorum et glande corruptum?*' If indeed Cicero was ironically alluding to Clodius in terms of a sacrificial bull that had earlier escaped but was now caught near Bovillae (this was a frequent feature of foundation-legends, cf. Weinstock 1971:5-6), as an indication of a new 'beginning', here inverted as the onset of renewed violence, not peace and prosperity, this reference of Cicero's could be an early indication of the direction that his thought was beginning to take. Having observed the turbulent political realignments of the fifties, and the intensified violence resulting from Clodius' death, it should have come as no surprise for Cicero to see his hopes of a stabilised republican order dashed by the reality of political power play. From this point on,

hindsight grown in importance for Cicero from a mere scuffle between two veteran street fighters to a major clash which signified the elimination of one of the chief dangers that was posed to the well-being of the republic.⁸ However, contrary to his own wishful expectations, even with Clodius (*hostis* and *pestis* of the republic)⁹ out of the way, all was not well at Rome. Power play marked by violence and bribery was still the most popular activity among ambitious politicians. Civil disorder did not come to an end on 18 January 52 and the 'battle' between the respective supporters of Clodius and Milo continued in the courts after Pompeius was made nominally sole consul when he was commissioned to set the state in order and put an end to the disturbances.¹⁰

Armed with the unparalleled powers awarded him by the senate, Pompeius set about to organise the state. His reform measures¹¹ included special courts (under supervision of his own armed men) responsible for the trials dealing with the violence of 52. From the tone of Cicero's remarks on the 'unnecessary' new procedures introduced to deal with violence after Clodius' death, one can deduce his disapproval of the extent to which Pompeius' specific powers empowered him, virtually acting as sole ruler.¹²

Cicero's pressure on Atticus for information about political affairs at Rome increased (*Att.* 5.13.3, 5.14.3) indicating serious concern on Cicero's side (*mirifice sollicitus sum* 5.15.3).

⁸ Later, in February 50, Cicero even seems to draw a parallel between the significance of the Clodius-Milo encounter and that of the battle of Leuctra in 371 BC when Rome was released from Spartan oppression, as, by implication, Rome was delivered from Clodian 'tyranny' (*Att.* 6.1). In June 50, Cicero even refers to Milo as Κρωτωνιάτης τυρραννοκτόνος, the Crotonian slayer of the 'tyrant' Clodius (*Att.* 6.4).

⁹ *Pestis* is Cicero's favourite term of abuse for Clodius, the embodiment of a dangerous pestilence that poses a serious threat to the health of the republic. Cf. *Cic. Dom.* 2.6, 5.1, 26.1, 7, 72.1, 85.9, 99.1, *Har. Resp.* 6.10, *Vat.* 33.10.

¹⁰ As *consul solus* Pompeius was virtually a dictator, commissioned to complete the specific task of putting the state in order.

¹¹ Cf. Taylor (1949:149-52) for discussion.

¹² *Cic. Mil.* 13, 70. Also, the extant *Pro Milone*, showing a confident Cicero (see note 17 below), was probably delivered at the time of Cicero's successful prosecution of T. Munatius Plancus Bursa (*tr.* 52). Cf. Stone (1980) who convincingly argues for the immediate aftermath of the trial of Plancus, and Berry (1993a and b) for discussion on the existence of two versions of the *Pro Milone* known in antiquity. Cicero's attitude towards Pompeius in the latter part of the speech (70) is almost hostile. In 52 Cicero appears to sympathise with Titus Fadius (*Fam.* 5.18), who was convicted for bribery under Pompeius' legislation. Cicero's tone, however, remains cautious when referring (by implication) to Pompeius merely as 'an important powerful person.' This is an indication of the tense political atmosphere in Rome where persistent rumours of a possible revival of the office of *dictator* still lingered.

During this year, Caelius, now tribune, sided with Milo, who was standing for the consulship.¹³ Milo enjoyed considerable popular support (*Fam.* 2.6) and could if elected as consul prove himself to be a dangerous opponent to both Pompeius and Caesar. Caelius proved himself a loyal friend (a characteristic highly valued by Cicero)¹⁴ to Milo, for, as tribune, Caelius not only supported Milo in public against accusations of devising an ambush for Clodius, but he also opposed the bills of Pompeius on which the senate was to pass a resolution that in effect recognised the attack on Clodius as terrorism against the state (*contra rem publicam*). Milo, formerly supported by Pompeius from 58 to 56 BC,¹⁵ now faced his enmity.¹⁶ He was brought to trial, and was unsuccessfully defended by Cicero (who was seemingly intimidated by a hostile court and military presence).¹⁷

Though Cicero failed to save Milo from exile,¹⁸ he, with the support of Caelius, did manage to gain the acquittal of Milo's lieutenant, Saufeius, who supposedly had dealt Clodius the death blow. Optimism slowly returned to Cicero after his successful prosecution of T. Munatius Plancus Bursa (*Fam.* 7.2), follower of Clodius and ringleader in the riots following his death. To Cicero, Pompeius now seemed less of a menace to the republic; in fact, it seemed, for the time being, that Pompeius was aligned with the *boni*, and acting as protector in the interest of the state. Meanwhile, in reaction to rumours of

¹³ The other two candidates were Metellus Scipio, Pompeius' new father-in-law, and Plautius Hypsaesus, who was on Pompeius' staff during the sixties.

¹⁴ Cicero of Caelius in August 50: '*bonus civis et bonus amicus es*' (*Fam.* 2.15.3). Cf. Cicero's praise of Caelius during the trial of Milo: '*M. Caelius, tribunus plebis, vir et in re publica fortissimus, in suscepta causa firmissimus, et bonorum voluntati, auctoritati senatus deditus, et in hac Milonis sive invidia sive fortuna, singulari, divina, incredibili fide*' (*Mil.* 91).

¹⁵ *Mil.* 38-40, 68.

¹⁶ *Qfr.* 3.2.2, 6.6, 7.2. With the consular elections delayed, rumours had it that Pompeius was being considered for a dictatorship, and Milo was said to have considered vetoing such a proposal (*Qfr.* 3.6.4, *Att.* 6.18.3).

¹⁷ Asconius 41-41C, Dio Cass. 40.54.2, Plut. *Cic.* 35.2-5.

¹⁸ This must be seen as an ironic turn of events, for Milo in 57 (then tribune) intervened to Cicero's advantage by imprisoning Clodius' gladiators when they disrupted a meeting where the final vote was to be passed for Cicero's recall from exile (*Sest.* 75-78, 85). From about 56 a relationship appears to have developed between Cicero and Milo that proved mutually beneficial: In return for Cicero's efforts to persuade M. Marcellus to act on Milo's behalf when prosecuted by Clodius (*Qfr.* 2.3.1), Milo provided a guard for Cicero's house. Cicero attended Milo's wedding (*Att.* 4.13.1, 5.8.2) and supported his candidature for consulship (*Fam.* 2.6.3). Cf. Lintott (1974) for a full discussion of Cicero's close association with Milo.

Caesar's strengthening of his power base in Gaul,¹⁹ opposition was slowly on the increase within the senatorial fold, where it was proposed that discussion of Caesar's replacement in Gaul should be brought before the senate.²⁰

These were heady days. It does therefore not seem strange to find Cicero in the first week of May 51 extremely reluctant to take up the burden of governorship in Cilicia.²¹ From the tone of his letters from abroad one senses in Cicero slight optimism²² tempered by his disappointment and frustration at being removed from the centre of events, where his concern for the troubled political situation lay.²³ For him Caelius would prove a valuable life-line tying him to the centre of his political interest.

8.2 Political acumen of Caelius

The letters of 51 between Cicero and Caelius not only show Caelius advancing his own political career,²⁴ but also give an account of both decisions and rumours in contemporary

¹⁹ Rumours had it that Caesar had promised Roman citizen rights to the Transpadane Gauls (Cic. *Att.* 5.2, *Fam.* 8.1).

²⁰ Suet. *Iul.* 28.

²¹ Cicero's marked reluctance '*...contra voluntatem meam et praeter opinionem accidisset ut mihi cum imperio in provinciam proficisci necesse esset*' (*Fam.* 3.2.1) to endure '*sed feremus*' (*Att.* 5.15.3) this pressing responsibility '*huius ingentis molestiae*' (*Att.* 5.2.3) becomes the *Leitmotiv* of his correspondence during his period governorship: Cf. *Att.* 5.10.3, 5.14.1, 5.15.1, *Fam.* 3.6.5. He begs assistance against the possibility of prorogation of his provincial tenure from friends and contacts, Curio (*Fam.* 2.7), Paullus (15.3), Cassius (15.14), Hortensius (*Att.* 5.17), Atticus (5.13.3, 5.18.1, 6.2.6) and is toward the end most relieved at the prospect of only thirty three days remaining before he returns to Rome (6.5.3).

²² Optimism is evident in his references that indicate relief at the demise of Clodius (*Att.* 5.13.1) and his delighted reaction to Pompeius' invitation to have talks with him on his departure for Cilicia (*Att.* 5.5.2, 5.6.1, 5.7). It seems that Cicero then had the impression of a patriotically inclined Pompeius: '*civem illum egregium relinquebam et ad haec quae timentur propulsanda paratissimum*'. Caelius, however, had his reservations about the ambivalent behaviour of Pompeius as someone not openly laying the cards on the table: '*solet enim aliud sentire et loqui neque tantum valere ingenio ut non appareat quid cupiat*' (*Fam.* 8.1.3). Cf. Cicero's efforts to persuade Caelius to set aside his previous differences with Pompeius (*Att.* 5.6, 7, *Fam.* 2.8.2).

²³ Rome, Bovillae, Leuctra, all become places of preference to, for instance, Ephesus (*Att.* 5.13) where he lands and crowds welcome him, and Laodicia (*Att.* 5.15) his place of entry into distant Cilicia.

²⁴ Caelius had been tribune for 52, but now firmly launched his political career by winning the position of *curule aedile* for 50 BC. This position together with the possibility of holding successful aedilician games (see Caelius' unremitting requests to Cicero to send him panthers, *Fam.* 2.11.2, 8.2.2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 8.6.5, 9.3) was the key to the next office, the praetorship, and ultimately the consulship. Caelius, like most politicians of his day, had his own ambitions to consider. Cf. Cicero's congratulations to Caelius on his election to the aedileship and also on what could be expected to follow - '*gratulor laetorque cum praesenti tum etiam sperata tua*

Rome. Rumours and everyday gossip, were, however, not Cicero's chief pre-occupation in Cilicia.²⁵ This is clear from his reproach on July 6 (*Fam.* 2.8) to Caelius after having received several reports written by Caelius' scribe.²⁶ Caelius' own contribution, his insight, perception and above all, his *prognostications for the future* were of importance to Cicero.²⁷ By dint of flattery the requested information is coaxed from Caelius: '*vide quantum tibi meo iudicio tribuam nec mehercule iniuria; πολιτικώτερον enim te adhuc neminem cognovi*'. In fact, the imploring tone should leave no room for misunderstanding on Caelius' part: '*qua re ego nec praeterita nec praesentia abs te, sed, ut ab homine longe in posterum prospiciente, futura exspecto, ut ex tuis litteris, cum formam rei publicae viderim, quale aedificium futurum sit scire possim*' (*Fam.* 2.8). This is followed as a reminder later in November '*de republica ex litteris, ... cum praesentia tum etiam futura magis exspecto*' (2.10). Caelius' political view is required to be used simply as a lense to bring into focus the spectrum of the Roman political scene, thus enabling Cicero to project his own picture of the future trend in Roman politics.

dignitate' (*Fam.* 2.9.1). Perhaps Cicero, too, shared Caelius' enthusiasm and ambitious expectations for his younger friend's future career.

²⁵ Cf. Cicero's insistence on news from Rome and the political situation in his letters to Appius Pulcher (*Fam.* 3.8.10), Volumnius Eutrapelus (7.32.3) and Atticus (*Att.* 5.2, 5.4). Apart from Atticus and Caelius, Cicero's requests seem to have fallen on not too attentive ears. In June 50 Appius complied to Cicero's request of October 51 by sending him a detailed survey of the political situation in Rome (*Fam.* 3.11.4). This unexpected compliance by Appius was probably the exception to the rule, for Appius' letters, until now, concentrated mostly on his own trial. Cicero, at least, seems not only surprised but pleased as well with this letter from Appius.

²⁶ '*Quid? tu me hoc tibi mandasse existimas ut mihi gladiatorum compositiones, ut vadimonia dilata et Chresti compilationem mitteres et ea quae nobis cum Romae sumus narrare nemo audeat?*' Caelius must have expected Cicero's reaction '*quod exemplum si forte minus te delectarit ... fac me certiores*', for he is making excuses in advance: '*me excusat*' (8.1), but intends to send him the promised material (another promise - Atticus indeed proved to be the more reliable correspondent. See below n. 27). When the circumstances were to present themselves '*si quid in re publica maius actum erit, ad modum actum sit et quae existimatio secuta quaeque de eo spes sit diligenter tibi perscribemus*', Caelius would inform him of general views and expectations. He, however, does not qualify whose views, by implication not necessarily his own.

²⁷ Similar demands for an account of events from Rome and for views of *what is about to happen* is increasingly evident in Cicero's correspondence with Atticus during July: '*omni de rei publicae statu litteras exspecto ... eius modi ... ex quibus ego non quid fiat ... sed quid futurum sit sciam*.' (*Att.* 5.12.2), '*et si intellegis quam meum sit scire et curare quid in re publica fiat—fiat autem? immo vero etiam quid futurum sit, perscribe ad me omnia*' (*Att.* 5.13.3), '*scribas ad me omnia, quae sint, quae futura sint*' (*Att.* 5.14.3), and in January 49, during Cicero's return journey, the urgency of the request intensifies: '*Reliquum est ut et quid agatur quoad poteris explores scribasque ad me et quid ipse coniectura adsequere; quod etiam a te magis exspecto. nam acta omnibus nuntiantibus a te exspecto futura*'; 'μόντις δ' ἄριστος' (*Att.* 7.13.4), '*exspecto quae tua coniectura de rebus futuris*' (*Att.* 7.13a.3). Cf. *Fam.* 16.24.2 when Cicero requests Tiro to give a prognostic view about the political situation during November 44: '*quid futurum putes*'.

Cicero consistently refers to Caelius' brilliant intellect, his *inlustris ingenium*²⁸ associating connotations of brilliance, clarity, and nobility with Caelius, probably with the intention of inducing him to align himself with the *boni*, Cicero's famous term for the *inlustres viri* of his notional republican Rome.²⁹ This process of making Caelius agreeable to the *boni* seems to have originated in 56 during Caelius' trial, when Cicero cautiously included him among contemporary *inlustres viri* (*Cael.* 28, 43). Agreed, in *Pro Caelio* Cicero extols Caelius' remarkable assets mainly for rhetorical purposes, to mask the weakness of his arguments before the jury, but the main impression Cicero propagates, throughout his *corpus*, is one of Caelius' remarkable intellectual ability, not only in the ordinary sense, but also in the sense of political awareness. An apparently sincere appreciation for Caelius' intellect sets the tone in Cicero's correspondence with him during the years 51-50 BC. In spite of Caelius' own history, his apparent determination to pursue his own political ambition, Caelius' portrayal of the Roman political scene was perhaps then more neutral than Cicero's own conception of events,³⁰ and it seems as if Cicero realised this.

It becomes clear from Cicero's correspondence of 51 and 50 that discussion within Roman politics (from the middle of 51 onwards) focused mainly on the possibility of having Caesar recalled from his provincial Gallic command before his term officially expired. The initiative on the matter of the Gallic provinces was taken by the consul of 51, M. Marcellus, who advocated Caesar's immediate recall,³¹ but, according to Caelius, had to postpone to June discussion in the senate of the appointment of new governors in the Gallic provinces (*Fam.* 8.1). This was an indication of dissent within the senate itself,³² for, a year later, Caelius comments critically on Marcellus' inability even to get a

²⁸ *Cael.* 1, 45, 73.

²⁹ Interestingly enough in his speeches Cicero often uses *inlustris* in reference to trustworthy Roman witnesses. Cf. *Verr.* 2.17, 82, 87.

³⁰ At this early stage in Cicero's correspondence of 51, Caelius appears equally critical of both Caesar and Pompeius (*Fam.* 8.1). He was still under no obligation to either, whereas Cicero presumed himself to be in the confidence of Pompeius and felt himself under the misconception of a moral obligation to Pompeius for previous favours done (*Fam.* 3.10). He also owed Caesar a financial debt (*Att.* 5.1.2, 5.4.3).

³¹ Suet. *Iul.* 28.2, Appian *BC* 2.26, Caes. *BG* 8.53.

³² Marcellus did not have the backing of his colleague Sulpicius who was trying his best to avoid the prospect of a civil war. Cf. Suet. *Iul.* 20.1.

quorum: ‘*ne frequentiam efficere potuerant*’ (Fam. 8.9.2). Nor did Caelius have any prospect of decisive action from the senate: ‘*ut video, causa haec integra in proximum annum transferetur*’ (Fam. 8.9.5-6). By June 51 Caelius reports that Marcellus’ initiatives have subsided, ‘not from inertia but from policy’ (8.2.2). The matter of the Gallic provinces came up again in July when the senate met in the temple of Apollo (8.4) on account of Pompeius.³³ Caelius mentions two points of discussion. The first matter was supposed to deal with payment of Pompeius’ soldiers (*de stipendio Pompei*). According to Caelius, the issue, however, seemed less important to some members of the senate, since the opportunity was used to raise a question relating to a legion which Pompeius had lent to Caesar during the Gallic revolt. Caelius implies that Pompeius, bombarded with questions like ‘*quo numero esset, quoad pateretur eam Pompeius esse in Gallia*’, was being urged (*coactus est*) to recall this legion. This could be interpreted as senatorial efforts to play off Pompeius against Caesar. Pompeius reacted strongly by saying that he would recall his legion (*se legionem abducturum*), but in his own time, not immediately (*sed non statim*) and certainly not under pressure (*sub mentionem et convicium obtrectatorum*). Although Pompeius’ attitude here is still ambivalent,³⁴ the scene was being set for confrontation. Small wonder that Caelius later in August sarcastically refers to senatorial proceedings on this issue as a charade of childish play.³⁵

Caelius reports that the second point of discussion (*de successione Caesaris*)³⁶ led to a decision eventually being made to have a debate on the replacement of provincial governors as soon as Pompeius should return from Ariminum. During discussion Pompeius is said (so Caelius) to have remarked ‘that everyone ought to obey the senate’. Clearly the vetoing of decisions by the tribunes was beginning to have a grating effect not only on senators, but on Pompeius as well.

³³ Cic. *Qfr.* 2.3.3.

³⁴ Caelius clearly indicates that Pompeius agreed very reluctantly.

³⁵ See below Fam. 8.5.2: ‘*nosti enim haec tralaticia: de Galli<i>s constituetur; erit qui intercedat; deinde alius existet qui, nisi libere liceat de omnibus provinciis decernere senatui, reliquas impedit. sic multum ac diu ludetur, atque ita diu ut plus biennium in his trictis moretur.*’

³⁶ I agree with Kierdorf (1986), who argues for a neuter reading *interrogatum* [est] against, for instance, Shackleton Bailey’s masculine ‘*inde interrogatus de successione C. Caesaris*’. Pompeius himself was not just being put in a tight spot, Caelius here introduces a new point of discussion, separate from the previous issue (*de stipendio Pompei*), emphasising the crucial importance of the issue of Caesar’s possible early replacement. The question raised here, was not by chance, as most translations seem to indicate, but a frequently discussed topic for 51.

Caelius' hopes for the realisation of the proposed debate during August did not materialise. By mid September Caelius' impatience with senatorial procrastination '*expectationem*' (*Fam.* 8.9.1) and ineptness bristles in the pages of his correspondence. Scathing remarks in November depict a stale senate led by the slow and inefficient consuls Marcellus (*tardus et parum efficax*) and Sulpicius (*cunctator* 8.10.3).³⁷ Senatorial discussion on the question of the Gallic provinces has indeed become the all too familiar routine (*nosti enim tralaticia*) described by Caelius in *Fam.* 8.5.2: a decision will be made '*de Galliis constituetur*', to be followed by somebody's veto '*erit qui intercedat*' (6-7). In fact, the whole procedure has become a tedious but dangerous game with senators playing for time and trifling with problematic questions: '*sic multum ac diu ludetur, atque ita diu ut plus biennium in his tricis moretur*' (9-10).

During September Caelius indicates open rivalry between Pompeius and Caesar. Pompeius now seems to have reconsidered the privilege that was granted Caesar in 52: '*Pompeius tuus aperte Caesarem et provinciam tenere cum exercitu et consul^{} fieri non vult*>' (8.9.5). Eventually, in October, Caelius was able to report that after many postponements and much grave debate (8.8.4) the senate had passed a decree, a copy of which Caelius enclosed for Cicero.³⁸ From Caelius' record of the interchange in the senate³⁹ the indication is clear that Pompeius is now moving into the open as opposition for Caesar. Pompeius on this occasion has declared that he would not hesitate to give a decision *sine iniuria* on Caesar's provinces after March 50 (8.8.9).⁴⁰ This eventually resulted in the passing of a decree stating that the question of Caesar's provinces would be discussed on March 1st 50.

³⁷ Given Caelius' natural inclination one may presume a not unlikely allusion to the famous Fabius, thus perhaps also implying the danger of a 'Hannibal at the gates' of Rome.

³⁸ All decrees drafted seem to have had the intention of weakening Caesar's position, and all, except the one that determined a date for discussion of the provinces in March 50, were vetoed. The three vetoed drafts proposed were: that attempts to veto or delay the introduction of any motion regarding the provinces would be considered *contra rem publicam*, Caesar's veterans were to be pensioned off, and praetorian provinces should be governed by ex-praetors, not ex-consuls (*Fam.* 8.8.4-7).

³⁹ Atticus too, sent Cicero a report on the senate's decrees involving Caesar's Gallic command (*Att.* 5.20.8).

⁴⁰ This was probably the date on which Caesar's provincial command actually expired. The date on which his command was to expire officially is still hotly debated. Cf. Jameson (1970) and Stockton (1975).

Supplementary questions put to Pompeius to ensure his co-operation suggest that the senate was still not sure as to how he would react under pressure:

cum interrogaretur <quid> si qui tum intercederent, dixit hoc nihil interesse utrum C. Caesar senatui dicto audiens futurus non esset an pararet qui senatum decernere non pateretur. 'quid si' inquit alius 'et consul esse et exercitum habere volet?' (*Fam.* 8.8.9).

To Caelius this discourse becomes evidence of the suspected strained relations between Caesar and Pompeius: '*his vocibus ut existimarent homines Pompeio cum Caesare esse negotium effecit*', an impression strengthened by Pompeius' evasive reaction to questions put to him. His answers are not straightforward and the assumption, so Caelius seems to suggest, could be made that Pompeius' mind was made up, and, that in case of opposition, he could resort to force. Not only his choice of words, as reported by Caelius, but more so the self-assured tone in which these were conveyed, betrayed the seriousness of the breach that had developed between himself and Caesar. It seems that for Caelius the implication of Pompeius' replies was that it was immaterial (*hoc nihil interesse*) whether or not Caesar disobeyed the senate or was setting someone up to veto a decision.

It would appear then that Pompeius assumed the senate's decision to be in accordance with his own. Such an assumption reflects the self-assurance and confidence Pompeius had displayed ever since his appointment as sole consul.⁴¹ Given the support Pompeius had enjoyed as Rome's hero of deliverance from anarchy, the assumption was perhaps not altogether unfounded. I see Caelius' choice of words in this report of the discourse between Pompeius and members of the senate as a deliberate portrayal of Caesar and Pompeius as future opponents. In this depiction of the two generals, Pompeius is shown to resemble Caesar in outward appearance, displaying some of Caesar's well known attributes as *imperator*. Pompeius' promise that he would not hesitate '*se non dubitaturum*' (*Fam.* 8.8.9) to act after the first of March recalls the established image of an unhesitating Caesar. Caelius' choice of words '*quam clementer*' could very well be

⁴¹ Cf. Cicero's ironic remarks when he uses Pompeius' laudatory cognomen *Magnus* in his correspondence, for example, during the years when Pompeius was not living up to the expectations of Cicero and others to whom the affairs of state were of cardinal importance: *Att.* 2.13 (59 BC) and *Fam.* 8.13 (50 BC). Cf. Plutarch's narrative depicting a boastful Pompeius stamping his foot to summon the entire Italy (*Pomp.* 57.5) and Cicero's use of the nickname *Sampsiceramus* for Pompeius (*Att.* 2.14.1, 2.16.2, 2.17.1 and 2.23.2, 3).

ironising the apparent smoothness or mildness of Pompeius' reply, not only as an indication of hidden but suspected violence to be unleashed, but also as a possible word play on Caesar's magnanimous and ostentatious display of *clementia*, a feature also not always free from ulterior motives. This would be consistent with Caelius' earlier assessment of the mooted duplicity of Pompeius.

Pompeius on this occasion appears to cast himself in the role of a father handling his wayward son, perhaps in deliberate contrast with the former filial relationship he had with Caesar,⁴² which ended with the death of his wife. The harsh image he uses now of his 'son' (Caesar) intent on beating his 'father' (Pompeius) with a club (*quid si filius meus fustem mihi impingere volet?*), belies the deceptively mild tone of Pompeius' retaliation. The implication must surely be that such flouting of the authority of Pompeius and the senate should be awarded with punishment for disobedience. The answer could thus be interpreted as a hidden warning to Caesar.⁴³

In February 50 Caelius reports that the anti-Caesarian tribune Curio has made an abrupt change of side in favour of Caesar. This turn of events was brought on by the refusal of Curio's fellow pontiffs to accept his proposal to insert an intercalary month between February and March: '*levissime* [Curio] *enim, quia de intercalando non obtinuerat, transfugit ad populum et pro Caesare loqui coepit*' (*Fam.* 8.6.5). Curio's sudden defection has shocked the lethargic community out of its general comatose state '*veternus civitatis*' (8.6.4), transforming them into cannibals prepared to rend the turncoat limb from limb (*ferventissime concerpitur*). Curio's support for Caesar materialised as vetoes in the interest of Caesar. This, and the collusion of Curio and the consul Paullus, ensured that all discussion of the consular provinces was delayed. Even in April when discussions eventually took place (8.11.3), Curio prevented any decision from being reached when he strongly opposed Pompeius' suggestion that Caesar should leave his province on November 13.

⁴² Pompeius was previously Caesar's son-in-law.

⁴³ On the other hand it could also be interpreted as Pompeius reassuring the senate of the unlikely prospect of a potential quarrel between 'father and son' taking place - an interpretation that seems consistent with Pompeius' tendency toward ambivalence. But reassurance could also take the form of a display of force, emphasising Pompeius' pre-eminence as military protector of the state. His tough language seems more consistent with the image of decisive action which he promised for March 50.

In June no senatorial action was taken to suppress Curio (*Fam.* 8.13), and by then the senate had accepted that a person should be allowed to stand for office while retaining an army, probably out of fear that Caesar with his strong army (8.11) would come to the rescue of his newly loyal tribune. According to Caelius even Pompeius was positively apprehensive ‘*plane timet Caesarem designatum*’ (8.11.2) about such a prospect.⁴⁴ Sentiments within the senate and among Roman citizens were changing in the light of a looming civil war, and Pompeius, while becoming increasingly dominant in the state, was no less a threat to republican interest than Caesar was. In June Cicero mentions reports he had received of rowdy meetings at Rome (*Fam.* 2.12). Curio’s defection was not perhaps the only possible political shift at hand. Caelius later admired much of what Caesar was doing. The close friendship between him and Curio could perhaps have worked to nudge him towards a similar move. Perhaps Cicero was not quite sure of Caelius’ position, hence his urging of Caelius to stay in the ‘light’ of Rome (*Urbem, urbem, mi Rufe, cole et in ista luce vive!*) as opposed to ‘sojourn abroad of any kind’ (*omnis peregrinatio ... obscura et sordida est*).⁴⁵ This was consistent with Cicero’s emphasis on sticking to ‘true convictions’ (*Fam.* 2.12.2).

In August Cicero is not hesitant to put his fears on paper: ‘I think you [Caelius] find yourself torn between loyalties’ (*Fam.* 2.15). His suspicions are confirmed in the same month when Caelius (*Fam.* 8.14) foresees the inevitability of civil war and mentions that he himself is not sure what course of action to take.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cf. Caelius’ reference to Pompeius’ suffering stomach pains. Apparently stress was taking its toll and Pompeius’ health was suffering.

⁴⁵ In Caesar’s entourage perhaps? This expression is usually taken as reflecting Cicero’s distaste for Cilicia, but it can be taken as a positive injunction for Caelius to stay at Rome and not move out to join Caesar.

⁴⁶ Caelius and Atticus both seem to have recognised Caesar’s strength, and have probably therefore decided to make the safer political choice, Caelius by joining the Caesarian side, while Atticus opted for a neutral stance by staying in Italy during the civil war. This was typical of his usual conduct which aimed at keeping good relations with everybody while not actively participating in politics - this was probably in line with his Epicurean beliefs. In December Cicero was still under the impression that Atticus supported the Pompeian cause ‘*adsentior Cn. Pompeio, id est T. Pomponio*’ (*Att.* 7.7.7). By 17 February 49, however, he was less sure of Atticus’ loyalties ‘*sed mihi videris aliud tu honestum meque dignum in hac causa iudicare atque ego existimem*’ (8.2.2), and by the end of March Cicero mentions a meeting between Caesar and Atticus outside Rome (8.9.2). A week later, Atticus is seen at the Regia (10.3a).

8.3 ‘*Meri terrores Caesariani*’: the vision sharpens

So Caelius’ reports to Cilicia enabled Cicero to keep up with events at Rome. The threat of Caesar’s ascendance now seemed very real to Cicero. Previous speculation (in December 51) on Caesar’s reaction to the changing political climate (*Att.* 5.20), now a year later, turns from mere fear of Caesar’s recalcitrance to the certainty of violent conflict (7.7.7).⁴⁷ Cicero must have given the idea of a civil war serious consideration after August when Caelius had prophesied that war would come within a year. Writing to Atticus in October Cicero mentioned frightening reports about Caesar ‘*meros terrores ... Caesarianos*’ which indicated that he was refusing to give up his army, and most importantly, that it was rumoured that Pompeius intended to abandon Rome ‘*Pompeio in animo esse urbem relinquere*’ (6.8.2). Although Cicero had hoped these dreadful rumours (*plura horribilia*) to be false (*spero falsa*), his hope for the realisation of a political solution was markedly fading. On October 15 he visualises the political situation to be extremely dangerous ‘*quam provideo in summis periculis*’ (*Att.* 6.9.5).⁴⁸ On the following day he foresees ‘the greatest struggle history has ever known - *videre enim mihi videor tantam dimicationem ... tantam quanta numquam fuit*’ (7.1.2). This vision of a struggle of apocalyptic dimensions was apparently discussed in previous correspondence from Atticus ‘*ut et tu ostendis et ego video, summa inter eos contentio*’ (7.1.3), and this could have influenced Cicero in early December to view the political situation as an impending struggle for personal power which was placing the entire Roman community at risk.⁴⁹

From his letter written on December 9 it becomes evident that Cicero, at this stage, had also (as Caelius did in *Fam.* 8.14)⁵⁰ come to the conclusion that in the event of civil war Caesar would probably emerge as the victor (*Att.* 7.3.4-5). Therefore Cicero seems to have thought it more expedient to urge Pompeius towards peace by yielding to the

⁴⁷ This was confirmed when, on his return to Rome (January 4), Cicero found a belligerent and divided senate to greet him (*Fam.* 4.1.1, 16.11).

⁴⁸ Cf. Cicero’s letter to Tiro in November (*Fam.* 16.9.3) ‘*Romae vereor ne ex Kal. Ian. magni tumultus sint*’ and *Att.* 7.3.5 ‘*sic enim sentio, maximo in periculo rem esse*’.

⁴⁹ *Att.* 7.3.4 ‘*De sua potentia dimicant homines hoc tempore periculo civitatis*’.

⁵⁰ In *Att.* 7.3.6 Cicero rues Caelius’ decision to join the Caesarian side and shows dismay at Caelius’ not sticking to his convictions. Cicero, however, may have misjudged him, for it probably was Caelius’ intention all along to choose the stronger side in the event of civil war. Caelius’ opportunistic remark ‘to follow the stronger and not the more honourable cause’ (*Fam.* 8.14.3) is fully consistent with his defection to the Caesarians.

demands of Caesar (7.5.5). On December 10 Pompeius dashed Cicero's hope for peace, leaving no prospect of compromise '*de re publica autem ita mecum locutus est quasi non dubium bellum haberemus: nihil ad spem concordiae*' (Att. 7.4.2). By mid December Cicero finds the political situation increasingly alarming: '*de re publica cottidie magis timeo*' (7.5.4). He also begins to question the integrity of the *boni* (*boni, ut putantur*) and mentions a general public dissatisfaction with the state of political affairs by implying that the people want peace. Actually it is Cicero who urges peace (*pace opus est*),⁵¹ for in the same paragraph he notes that the *boni* seem to disagree on political issues '*non enim boni consentiunt*'. On December 19 (Att. 7.7.5) Cicero's concern for the republic '*de republica valde timeo*' (Att. 7.6.2) drives him to openly blame the '*boni*' as responsible for a political situation where privileges granted to Caesar have become weapons against the state '*arma dedimus ut nunc cum bene parato pugnaremus*' (7.6.2) - so much so that Cicero foresees a scenario of slaughter to be perpetrated by Caesar similar to those created by Sulla and Cinna.

Further talks between Cicero and Pompeius confirmed Cicero's fears that Pompeius had no desire for peace (7.8.4), for he seems to be implying with a quotation from the *Iliad* (ξυνὸς Ἐνυάλιος) that he had often suspected that war was inevitable, for 'Mars was impartial' to both contenders. It appears that Cicero was beginning to consider Pompeius to be just as fallible and dangerous as Caesar, and that both were prone to behaviour that could be described as 'insane' or reckless.⁵² In January 49 Cicero has difficulty to understand (*ego enim ἄπορῶ*) Pompeius' behaviour (Att. 7.11.3), neither does he have knowledge of what Pompeius plans '*Gnaeus noster quid consili ceperit capiatve nescio adhuc*', nor does he think Pompeius himself knows what to do '*ne ipsum quidem scire puto, nostrum quidem nemo*' (7.12.2) while all he is doing seems unwise '*stulte omnia et incaute*' (7.10.1), therefore unstatesmanlike, in Cicero's eyes:

'mihi enim nihil ulla in gente umquam ab ullo auctore rei publicae ac duce turpius factum esse videtur quam a nostro amico factum est, cuius ego vicem doleo; qui urbem reliquit, id est patriam, pro qua et in qua mori praeclarum fuit'
(Att. 8.2.2).⁵³

⁵¹ Cf. Att. 7.6.2.

⁵² Cf. Cicero's description of Pompeius' 'senseless' decision to abandon Rome (Att. 7.11.3) and the possibility that Caesar will give in to the mad inclination to march on Rome (7.8.4).

⁵³ Cf. Att. 8.11.1-2 for Pompeius' failure as Cicero's ideal statesman.

Eventually by February 49 Cicero expressed his eventual understanding of Pompeius' plans: that it was part of Pompeius' military strategy (and understanding of military matters was not Cicero's strong point) to mobilise the entire Italy and organise a fleet behind him (*Att.* 8.11.2).⁵⁴ Thus we see Cicero, albeit disillusioned, beginning to reason objectively, not just speculating, by analysing events (*haec breviter exposui*) put before him at the request of Atticus (*a te invitatus*) to such an extent that he feels himself confident enough to make calculated forecasts '*προθεσπιζω igitur ... coniectura prospiciens*' (8.11.3).

With this we come back to the title of the dissertation. Unlike the *vates*, who 'speaks divine truths' unrelated to any examination of concrete materials, Cicero is by now carefully examining, like a *haruspex*, the *viscera* of the sacrificial animal that he perceives the *res publica* to have become. Part of these *viscera* are the machinations of Caesar and Pompeius. So distance has served to sharpen Cicero's perceptions, and his focus is not on Caesar alone, but on the titanic struggle between Caesar and Pompeius which he now sees as inevitable. Cicero's evaluation of the antagonists will form the topic of the next chapter, starting with Pompeius.

⁵⁴

Cf. Caesar *BC* 3.3.

9. Close encounters

Near the heart

9.1 ‘*Ille noster amicus*’: Cicero’s appraisal of Pompeius

Cicero and Caesar provide the earliest contemporary accounts of the character of Pompeius. Most ancient writers, from Caesar’s time to the late fourth century, agree on the broad outline of events, but display considerable variety in finer details, while most concentrate on the figure of Pompeius as an *exemplum* of the vagaries of fate, rather than as an historical figure. As such these accounts display the moralising and rhetorical influences typical of ancient historiography. The picture of one of the chief agents of the downfall of the republic therefore remains incomplete.

There is a contradiction between Cicero’s public utterances about Pompeius (his speeches as reflection of the general public opinion of the time) and the thoughts in his private letters and theoretical treatises. In what follows these will be delineated and the apparent progression of his opinions about the general will be traced.

It seems that the early relationship between Cicero and Pompeius was based mainly on political expediency. In a letter to Atticus of July 65 Cicero probably felt justified to refer to Pompeius as a political ally (*Pompei nostri amici*),¹ especially after having officially supported the *lex Manilia* in 66, which gave Pompeius his Mithridatic command in the East. Three years later, in a letter to Pompeius (April 62), Cicero still assumes himself to be sharing in the ‘mutual’ friendship. However, in this letter it does become clear that although the former had formed new alliances (*tuos veteres hostis, novos amicos*),² and that the over-enthusiastic optimism of Cicero was one-sided, he recognised it as such, but nevertheless persisted in his efforts to cement the relationship, not only on a political level, but on a personal level as well:

¹ Att. 1.1.2. Cf. Att. 1.12.3: ‘*Pompeium nobis amicissimum constat esse*’ (January 1, 61).

² Att. 5.7.1. These former enemies were probably anti-senatorial supporters, and could possibly even include Caesar and Crassus (cf. Shackleton Bailey 1978:280). This could account for Cicero’s own explanation that Pompeius’ unexpected reluctance to show his gratitude in public stemmed from the possible fear of giving offence to any one - i.e. to Caesar who had condemned Cicero’s conduct in the Catilinarian affair.

cum veneris, tanto consilio tantaque animi magnitudine a me gesta esse cognosces ut tibi multo maiori quam Africanus fuit [a] me non multo minore<m> quam Laelium facile et **in re publica et in amicitia adiunctum esse patiare** (*Fam.* 5.7.3).

This offer of Cicero to be a friend and political adviser, a true Laelius to Pompeius' Scipio, was evidently not accepted with warm affection, for the tone of Cicero's letters of 61 conveys a degree of coolness and criticism against Pompeius.³ From as early as the sixties then, we may deduce that Cicero had trouble understanding Pompeius.⁴ Early letters testify to the uncertainty Cicero entertained with regard to Pompeius' true intentions and indicate his doubts about Pompeius' sincerity.

As early as January 61 Cicero describes Pompeius as follows:

Tuus autem ille amicus [Pompeius] scin quem dicam? de quo tu ad me scripsisti, postea quam non auderet reprehendere laudare coepisse nos, ut ostendit, **admodum diligit, amplectitur, amat, aperte laudat, occulte, sed ita ut perspicuum sit, invidet. nihil come, nihil simplex, nihil** ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς **illustre, nihil honestum, nihil forte, nihil liberum** (*Att.* 1.13.4).⁵

At this stage Cicero appears to have recognised that there were two sides to Pompeius, also that he did not seem to share Cicero's own ideals and concerns for the welfare of the state. The remainder of the year 61 shows increasing disappointment on Cicero's part in

³ *Att.* 1.13.4, 1.14.1-4. See below note 5.

⁴ Pompeius did not start his military career exactly as a pillar of consistency. What Pompeius may have considered as political expediency could also be interpreted as the deceit and self interest of a turncoat. Plutarch *Pomp.* 3-6, for instance, mentions his changing of sides, after having served under Sulla together with his father, Pompeius Strabo, first to the Marian side under Cinna, and then, when he found himself unpopular with the Marians, after raising a private army, he joined the Sullan fold once again. Later ancient writers seem to consider him as a paradigm of deceit. Frontinus, for instance, (*Strat.* 2.11.2) relates how Pompeius in Trojan horse style took possession of the city of Cauca by bringing the apparently wounded and ill into the city and Dio Cassius pictures him as being in the habit of always pretending not to desire the things he wanted the most (36.24.3).

⁵ Already in 61 Cicero seems aware of a discrepancy in Pompeius' behaviour (**aperte laudat, occulte ... invidet**, cf. *Att.* 1.14.4 **aperte tecte**). His scathing criticism of not only Pompeius' personal shortcomings, but also his meagre performance on the political front (**nihil ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς illustre**) sharply contrasts with the laudation he had given Pompeius in 66 (*Manil.* 62). In public, however, Pompeius has earned himself the nickname of 'Cn. Cicero' (*Att.* 1.16.10). By July 61, then, to all appearances the friendship was blossoming, and in March 60 even the senate decided that both Cicero and Pompeius as pillars of Roman security should remain in the city, instead of joining an embassy sent to Gallia to prevent Gallic support for the revolt of the Helvetii against Rome: '**ut nos duo quasi pignora rei publicae retineri videremur**' (*Att.* 1.19.3).

his attitude towards Pompeius. In February 61 Cicero reveals his disappointment with Pompeius when the latter on completion of his Eastern campaigns failed to impress as a public speaker.⁶ He even implies that Pompeius has displayed an element of jealousy towards himself when, during Crassus' eulogy of Cicero before the senate, he was outspoken by Crassus: '*proximus Pompeium sedebam. intellexi hominem moveri*' (Att. 1.14.3).⁷ By July Cicero complains with dismay that Pompeius has given his electoral support to one L. Afranius (who was standing for consul at the time)⁸, while displaying what was to Cicero the very unstatesmanlike behaviour of resorting to bribery, a not unfamiliar *modus operandi*, given his position:⁹

Nunc est expectatio comitiorum; in quae omnibus invitis trudit noster Magnus Auli filium, atque in eo neque auctoritate neque gratia pugnat sed quibus Philippus omnia castella ex-pugnari posse dicebat in quae modo **asellus onustus auro** posset ascendere. consul autem ille δευτερεύοντος histrionis similis suscepisse negotium dicitur et domi divisoires habere. (Att. 1.16.12).

Yet during December of this year Cicero again seems to desire a closer relationship with his illusive political 'partner', for he acknowledges to Atticus that political expediency forms the foundation of his relationship with Pompeius: '*utor Pompeio familiarissime*' (Att. 1.17.10). Cicero is not afraid to refer to Pompeius as his road to political safety and as the insurance of his own political influence. One may, however, deduce that Atticus had his doubts about such political ties, for Cicero is quick to justify his action and he claims to be on his guard against the possible dangers of political *amicitia*: '*video quid*

⁶ Att. 1.14.1.

⁷ *Moveri* may in some contexts be interpreted as positive. Shackleton Bailey's translation "put out" supports my interpretation of the word as indicating unease on the part of Pompeius.

⁸ Cicero showed no great admiration for this former legate of Pompeius whom he disparaged as a 'second rate consul' (Att. 1.16.12) who was thrust upon them by Pompeius, a 'lazy and feeble soldier - *ignavus ac sine animo miles*' (1.18.5) whose consulship could only be described as a 'black eye' (ὀπώπιον) afflicted on the Great Pompeius (1.20.5). Cicero is also contemptuous of Pupius Piso Frugi (*cos.* 60), another of Pompeius' protégés, and presents him not just as small-minded and perverse, politically inactive, a being set apart from the optimates: '*consul autem ipse parvo animo et pravo tamen, cavillator genere illo moroso quod etiam sine dicacitate ridetur, facie magis quam facetiis ridiculus, nihil agens in re publica, seiunctus ab optimatibus, a quo nihil speres boni rei publicae quia non vult, nihil metuas mali quia non audet*' (1.13.2), but also as lazy, somnolent, ignorant, untrustworthy and a turncoat: '*ille uno vitio minus vitiosus quod iners, quod somni plenus, quod imperitus, quod ἀπρακτότατος; sed voluntate ita καχέκτης ut Pompeium post illam contionem in qua ab eo senatus laudatus est odisse coeperit*' (1.14.6). He seems to be hinting at a similar opinion of Pompeius.

⁹ Pompeius sought to control not only the consulship but the tribunate as well by supporting his former legates Afranius and Metellus Celer, and L. Flavius who was in the process of drafting an agrarian bill. Bribery of the electorate took on such proportions that the senate was forced to pass decrees against electoral corruption.

dicas. cavebo quae sunt cavenda' (1.17.10). On January 20 of the following year Cicero voices his opinion (presumably shared by Atticus) that the state was in danger of collapse: '*iam exclames necesse est res Romanas diutius stare non posse*' (Att. 1.18.2),¹⁰ for the previous year witnessed the disruption of both senatorial authority and Cicero's efforts to ensure *concordia ordinum*.¹¹ The menace of a Clodius aspiring to the tribunate was becoming very real for Cicero early in the following year. This is clear from his constant insistence (an insistence which masked his actual doubts), that although Pompeius had behaved in an unstatesmanlike manner by failing to praise him (Cicero) properly, he nevertheless regarded Pompeius as being in the same camp as himself, even though he (Pompeius), who once could have been in the league of great statesmen, failed to live up to Cicero's expectations:

sed interea πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ οὐδ' ὄναρ quisquam inveniri potest. qui poterat,
familiaris (noster sic est enim, volo te hoc scire) ...

Nevertheless Cicero's attitude towards Pompeius remained guarded. The very next remark shows this: '*Pompeius togulam illam pictam silentio tuetur suam*' (Att. 1.18.6). The implication being that Pompeius safeguards his embroidered toga (which he had been authorised to wear at the games in 63 by tribunician law, and at Caesar's bidding) above all by keeping silent in his non-opposition to those from whom he had received this privilege. When Pompeius in March 60 suddenly broke his silence by commending Cicero before the senate and praising him as saviour of the state, and indeed of the Roman world (Att. 1.19.7), Cicero was not deceived. He writes to Atticus that he now, more than ever, considers his alliance with Pompeius to be a political necessity beneficial to both 'partners': '*cum hoc ego me tanta familiaritate coniunxi ut uterque nostrum in sua ratione munitior et in re publica firmior hac coniunctione esse possit*' (1.19.8). Again there is insistence on Cicero's own awareness of the dangers of their 'close friendship', and the advice to follow is '**not to trust anyone**': '*atque ita tamen [si] his novis amicitiiis implicati sumus ut crebro mihi vafer ille Siculus insusurret Epicharmus cantilenam illam suam*, 'νᾶφε καὶ μέμνας' ἀπιστεῖν. ἄρθρα ταῦτα τῶν φρενῶν' (Att. 1.19.8).

¹⁰ In light of the 'wound' inflicted on the state by Clodius' sacrilege during the festival of the Bona Dea, and his subsequent acquittal thanks to grotesque judicial bribery and defilement of justice in favour of the perpetrator: '*Adflicta res publica est empto constupratorque iudicio.*' (Att. 1.18.3).

By May 60 Atticus seems to agree with Cicero's negative picture of Pompeius as being shallow: '*nam neque de statu nobis nostrae dignitatis est recedendum neque sine nostris copiis intra alterius praesidia veniendum et is de quo scribis nihil habet amplum, nihil excelsum, nihil non submissum atque populare*' (Att. 1.20.2).

Early in January 59, Cicero had to face the reality of the coalition that was formed between Pompeius, Crassus and Caesar. His correspondence with Atticus shows an increasingly negative evaluation of Pompeius, with frequent third person allusions to the 'great' general, often by means of ironic nicknames or direct criticism of Pompeius' abuse of power at the expense of others.¹² Early in January he refers to Pompeius as an overdressed (*lascivus*) Epicrates¹³, a pretender overseeing court procedure in military dress.¹⁴ Cicero's criticism of Pompeius' military boots (*caligae*) strapped with white fillets (*fasciae cretatae*) as usually worn by kings¹⁵, could be indicative of his own suspicion that Pompeius Magnus possibly had designs for a position as sole ruler. It seems as though Cicero, in the late fifties, is deliberately undercutting his former

¹¹ '*sic ille annus duo firmamenta rei publicae per me unum constituta evertit; nam et senatus auctoritatem abiecit et ordinum concordiam disiunxit*' (Att. 1.18.3).

¹² Cicero's favourite nickname for Pompeius in this period 'Sampsiceramus' could be one of the coded nicknames (ἄλληγορίας) promised in Att. 2.20, a feature of the veiled language (ἐν αἰνιγμοῖς) mentioned in Att. 2.19.4. Nicknames such as *Sampsiceramus* (Att. 2.14.1, 2.16.2, 2.17.1 and 2.23.2, 3), the Sheik of Emesa who was said to have desired absolute rule over the entire Syria; *Arabarches* the Arabian Prince (2.17.3) and *Epicrates* (2.3.1) all denote foreign (and despotic) rulers and are used to mock Pompeius' oriental pretensions of grandeur. Cf. Cicero's use of 'Magnus' in Att. 1.16.11, 1.20.5, 2.13.2, 6.1.22 as a pun on his cognomen. Perhaps Pompeius was becoming in Cicero's perception an alien, an 'outsider' - he could even, apart from a possible pun on Marius (see Shackleton Bailey 1965: vol. 1, 370), use the fact of Pompeius' intervention in Jerusalem in 63 to give him the ironic triumphal appellation of '*hic noster Hierosolymarius*' (2.9.1). In *Rep.* 3 fr. 4, for instance, Cicero puns on the name 'Sardanapallus' as paradigm of immoderation in a ruler (see M. Schneider 2000:123-6). For similar punning on foreign names in Cicero, see Corbeill (1996:87-88).

¹³ '*Epicratem suspicor, ut scribis, lascivum fuisse. etenim mihi caligae eius et fasciae cretatae non placebant*' (Att. 2.3.1). Most commentators see this reference to Epicrates as a possibly hostile remark (cf. Shackleton Bailey 1965: vol. 1, 355-6, Corbeill 1996:181). Not so Greenhalgh (1980:203) who considers this 'jocular reference' a friendly 'poke in the ribs' with regard to a recent taste that Pompeius had acquired for wearing special styled boots similar to those military boots invented by the Athenian general Iphicrates. Humour apart, I consider Cicero's remark not so innocent. Given Cicero's expression of his disappointment one should expect a political undertone when he refers to Pompeius, the great statesman who did not materialise (Att. 1.18.7), not even as the shadow of a great Scipio Aemilianus Africanus, so much admired by Cicero as an exemplary statesman, general and scholar, who incidentally was also in the habit of wearing Greek footwear (*Rab. Post.* 27.3-5, Liv. 29.19.20) - with Cicero multiple meaning is not uncommon.

¹⁴ At the time Pompeius was suspected of trying to influence the case against Valerius, probably a friend of Cicero's.

¹⁵ Cf. Suet. *Iul.* 79.1, Corbeill (1996:181). Cf. the anecdote of Val. Max. 6.2.7 that it did not matter 'where Pompeius wore his diadem'.

eulogistic portrayal of Pompeius as Roman hero, whom he increasingly views in a negative light.

By April 59 Pompeius has become the ‘shaper of plebeians’ (*Att.* 2.9.1) after having assisted as augur in the *adrogatio* of Clodius into the plebeian class (2.12.1).¹⁶ Cicero expresses his awareness of growing criticism outside Rome against the present regime, especially evident in the general sentiment of hate towards Pompeius, whose cognomen at this time has virtually fallen into disrepute not unlike that of the infamous Crassus Dives.¹⁷ Early in May Cicero agrees with Atticus on his view that Pompeius seems intent on stirring the political cauldron for the worse.¹⁸ In Cicero’s mind Pompeius was confessedly contriving to become the embodiment of tyranny (ὁμολογουμένως τυραννίδα).¹⁹ Cicero has to admit that all along Pompeius has been entertaining the idea of absolute power, as did his colleagues whose objectives appeared clearly detrimental (*alias res pestiferas aditus*) to the state (*Att.* 2.17.1).

The political conduct of Pompeius²⁰ forms part of a political pattern apparently discerned by Cicero that seems to indicate just the beginning of a process that results in tyranny.²¹ This could be an early indication that Cicero, as early as 59 BC, displayed the ability to distance himself from the political events that he attempts to interpret. Though perturbed by the ills of his own political fragility at the time, Cicero claims to practice ἀδιαφορία (indifference as a state of mind) in such lamentable political matters (*Att.* 2.17.2). The claim, however, is not supported in the letters, especially in the instances where Cicero resorts to derogatory remarks on the reputation of Pompeius. Firstly, according to Cicero, the reputation of Pompeius as a statesman has suffered so much that (in contrast with Cicero himself), he should in the eyes of future generations rank below Cicero. Secondly,

¹⁶ Clodius was by now openly working against Cicero who could no longer rely on Pompeius’ promises to defend him against his archenemy.

¹⁷ This was probably P. Licinius Crassus Dives (*praetor* 57 BC). Cf. Shackleton Bailey (1965: vol. 1 p. 379). *Att.* 2.13.2, 2.14.1.

¹⁸ *Att.* 2.17.1: [Pompeius] *turbat*.

¹⁹ Cf. Cicero’s remark that Cato accused Pompeius of aiming at dictatorship ‘*privatum dictatorem*’ (*Qfr.* 1.2.15).

²⁰ His marriage to Julia, Caesar’s daughter, his monetary profligacy, and involvement with the Campanian land distribution were tell-tale signs of serious aspiration to power.

²¹ ‘*quae si essent extrema, tamen esset nimium mali; sed ea natura rei est ut haec extrema esse non possint*’ (*Att.* 2.17.1). A few years later Cicero formulates the premise that absolute rule under one man easily degenerates into tyranny (*Rep.* 1.44).

posterity should look down on Pompeius as a fallen public figure whose reputation (seen as a fiasco in itself) was even lower than that of a very poor stage play (2.17.2).²² Nevertheless, by July Cicero still desperately tries to reassure himself of Pompeius' friendship towards himself: '*Pompeius amat nos carosque habet. 'credis?' inquis. credo; prorsus mihi persuadet, sed quia volo*' (Att. 2.20.1).

Later in the same month Cicero again admits that Pompeius '*noster amicus*' (2.21.3) has become a political failure, in fact he is described as a fallen star '*deciderat ex astris*', one who had slid rather than progressed '*lapsus potius quam progressus*' (4), the very opposite of the successful statesman (that Cicero visualised in *De consulatu suo* 2) who deserves a place in heaven (*Rep.* 5.3.5, 6.16). Pompeius here is drawn as a disfigured painting, an idealistic Ciceronian work of art, now obscured by dirt. This prefigures the metaphor of the *res publica* as a faded painting.²³

By June 58 when his own woes had reached crisis levels, Cicero found himself more than ever incapable of fathoming Pompeius. In his letter to his brother Quintus he confesses: '*Pompeium etiam simulatorem puto*' (*Qfr.* 1.3.9). On the same day he remarks to Atticus that Pompeius must be held as an accomplice responsible for his ruin, he is even depicted as a traitor. When Cicero is allowed, through the good graces of Pompeius, to return to Rome, he is grudgingly grateful.²⁴

From 56 onwards Cicero seemed to take an independent stance in his court appearances, as well as in the senate, by speaking out against those aspects of the legislation of 59 that had been in the interest of the triumvirs.²⁵ The independent role that Cicero assumed, however, was hindered by the optimate sentiments he displayed during, for instance, the

²² Cf. Shackleton Bailey's commentary 1965: vol. 1 p. 385 on †phocis Curiana†. Watt (1962:260) suggests a comparison between Pompeius and Phalaris, the arch-tyrant, implying that Pompeius surpasses Phalaris as a tyrant. However, Cicero often compares Caesar to Phalaris (Att. 7.12.2, 20.2, Off. 2.7.26) whereas Pompeius is occasionally depicted as a stock character on stage, pompous and overdressed (Att. 1.18.16, 2.3.1, 2.17.2, Qfr. 3.4.2).

²³ '*nam quia deciderat ex astris, lapsus potius quam progressus videbatur; et, ut Apelles si Venerem aut Protogenes si Ialysum illum suum caeno oblitum videret magnum, credo, acciperet dolorem, sic ego hunc omnibus a me pictum et politum artis coloribus subito deformatum non sine magno dolore vidi.*' (Att. 2.21.4) For the republic as a faded painting cf. *Rep.* 5.12. See above Chapter Six section two.

²⁴ Cf. Cicero's sense of obligation to Pompeius: Att. 8.1.4, 9.1, 10.7, Fam. 1.8.2, Marc. 5.14.

²⁵ Cf. Att. 4.5, Vat. 29, Fam. 1.9. Cicero disapproved of any kind of agrarian legislation, in fact, he seems to consider it 'honourable' to strongly oppose it (Att. 2.3.3).

trial of Sestius in 56 (where he explicitly formulated the development of his political thought since 63).²⁶ Here his cross-examination of Vatinius resulted in vague threats by the triumvirs. In June 56 Cicero complains to Atticus about his loss of the liberty to speak freely on political issues. He perceives his situation as one where he, too, is forced to abandon principle, sincerity and honour: '*valeant recta, vera, honesta consilia*' (Att. 4.5.1).²⁷ By April 55 Cicero finds himself in his view reduced to the position of a slave, a captive, a politically emasculated person,²⁸ in fact, he estimates his own worth as nothing more than that ascribed to any mere camp-followers (ὀπαδοί).

In the same month Cicero again resorts to carefully-veiled third person allusions to Pompeius and expresses his wish rather to share Atticus' company than that of Pompeius whom he is forced to accompany: '*quam cum eo quocum video esse ambulandum*' (Att. 4.10.1). Cicero's former adulation of the man he had been instrumental in setting up on the road to power has now made place for open scepticism and he no longer places trust in even the private discussions he has with Pompeius, now holding his second consulship: '*quoque ut loquebatur – et opinor, usquequaque, de hoc [Pompeio] cum dicemus, sit hoc quasi καὶ τόδε Φωκυλίδου*' (4.9.1).²⁹

In December 54 Pompeius reminded Cicero through complaints to his brother Quintus (Fam. 1.9) to show 'good conduct' in the interest of both himself and Caesar. Cicero was compelled to renounce any prospects he may have nourished two years earlier of an independent political line (probably out of fear of being on the wrong side of the powerful alliance).³⁰ He duly 'contributed his good will to the advancement of a most illustrious man who put him under great obligation'. Following Atticus' advice given in November 56, Cicero decides to stick to 'the inner line' (τὴν ἔσω γραμμὴν) of political

²⁶ Sest. 97-98. Cf. Lenaghan (1969:20-21).

²⁷ This Cicero is forced to admit by himself condescending to write palinodes to glorify, for instance, the achievements of Caesar in Gaul.

²⁸ Att. 4.6.2: '*ego vero, qui, si loquor de re publica quod oportet, insanus, si quod opus est servus existimor, si taceo, oppressus et captus, quo dolore esse debeo?*'

²⁹ The parallel with Phocylides, the sixth century writer of maxims, who prefaced his work with the words 'This is another by Phocylides', not only emphasises Cicero's deep distrust of Pompeius, but may also serve as a warning to Atticus, as an indication not to trust Cicero's verbatim relaying of political affairs discussed with Pompeius.

³⁰ In the letter to Lentulus Spinther (Fam. 1.9.9) Cicero implies that his own safety can only be vouched for on condition that he pledges not to oppose the triumvirs. This situation was similar to that of 57 when Cicero's restoration from exile was to a large extent dependent on Quintus' promise that he would keep an eye on his brother's future political behaviour.

safety (*Att.* 4.8a) under the wing of the wielder of power who at this stage seemed to be invincible (*Fam.* 1.8.1-3).³¹

What was for Cicero Pompeius' increasingly arrogant behaviour, in this year seems to portend a desire to be all powerful '*unus ille omnia possit*' (*Qfr.* 3.4.2) as one who will not tolerate opposition, not even from Cicero. In October 54 Cicero informs his brother Quintus of the acquittal of Gabinius, which to him was a bitter pill to swallow. He describes his own submissive behaviour (he did not prosecute Gabinius) in terms of one who prefers not to be part of Pompeius' continued 'show'. Cicero does not want to fight Pompeius, here pictured as a powerful gladiator who might have easily bitten off Cicero's ear:

sed me alia moverunt: non putasset sibi Pompeius de illius salute sed de sua dignitate mecum esse certamen, in urbem introisset, ad inimicitias res venisset; cum Aesernino Samnite Pacideianus comparatus viderer, auriculam fortasse mordicus abstulisset, cum Clodio quidem certe redisset in gratiam (*Qfr.* 3.4.2).

The harsh reality, however, is that he is forced to play his submissive role within the constraints of Pompeius' political spectacle. This criticism of Pompeius' power-play in terms of gladiatorial games could be a reflection of the mild distaste that Cicero has conveyed to his friend M. Marius when describing the lavish opening of the Theatre of Pompeius in 55. Cicero seems to have found the entire affair rather tasteless.³² The continuing spectacle has indeed become flooded with too many elements of dramatic farce, elements that one could say were typical of and similar to Pompeius' political conduct during the early fifties.³³ By 55 Cicero may well have considered Pompeius

³¹ Of this Cicero seemed convinced in early 55. To Lentulus (*Fam.* 1.8.1) he remarks that he does not foresee the triumvirs relinquishing their power base in the near future: '*sunt quidem certe in amicorum nostrorum potestate, atque ita ut nullam mutationem umquam hac hominum aetate habitura res esse videatur.*' Cf. *Qfr.* 3.2.4 for Cicero's resolution to practice safe and 'sensible political conduct'.

³² '*Omnino, si quaeris, ludi apparatissimi, sed non tui stomachi; coniecturam enim facio de meo*' (*Fam.* 7.1.2).

³³ Ten years later in *De officiis* Cicero's view of Pompeius' lavish games (*magnificentissima vero nostri Pompei munera*) appears less critical. Here, where Cicero's aim is to explain Roman social and political behaviour, he acknowledges the political usefulness of extravagant games as a practice in Roman politics. He even justifies such political extravagance when practiced with moderation to benefit the state (*Off.* 2.57-59).

himself to have become the ‘mighty beast’ (*valentissima bestia*) capable of rending limb from limb any frail human (*homo imbecillus*).³⁴

This negative attitude of Cicero’s was by no means consistent, not even in the later years. When danger threatened, Pompeius could still be seen as a bulwark. As discussed above in Chapter Eight, the correspondence between Caelius and Cicero indicates that Cicero later (during the years 51 to 50) showed more confidence in Pompeius’ claims of commitment to the republic. In this period Cicero remarks to Atticus that his regard for Pompeius increases daily (*Att.* 6.2.10). Pompeius is even seen as a pillar of strength upholding the republic (6.3.4). Cicero’s hopeful expectations concerning Pompeius, however, were short-lived, and, on Cicero’s return to Rome in 49, soon turned to disillusionment.

Cicero’s general attitude towards Pompeius during the fifties, then, appears to have been one of disapproval, bordering on distrust. His disillusion with Pompeius deepened towards the end of 50.³⁵ In January 49 Cicero is utterly confounded when he receives news of Pompeius’ abandonment of Rome. To Atticus he describes this action of Pompeius as senseless: ‘*Tum nihil absurdius*’ (7.11.2); clearly it was incomprehensible to Cicero and tantamount to *perfidia* towards the *patria*.³⁶ The only consistency Cicero now detects in the behaviour of Pompeius is the fact that, for whatever reason, he is still keeping his intentions to himself (*Att.* 7.12.2).³⁷

On February 18 Cicero’s suspicion that Pompeius intends to take flight from Italy as well (*Att.* 8.3.1, 3), becomes a certainty: ‘*quod ab initio vidi nihil quaeri praeter fugam. eam si nunc sequor, quanam? cum illo [Pompeio] non*’ (*Att.* 8.3.5).³⁸ In the same letter (8.3.3)

³⁴ ‘*sed quae potest homini esse politico delectatio cum aut homo imbecillus a valentissima bestia laniatur aut praeclara bestia venabulo transverberatur?*’ (*Fam.* 7.1.3).

³⁵ In spite of such reservations, Cicero did join Pompeius, as is well known, and despite his ‘foreknowledge’ of destruction that was to follow. In his letter addressed to Caecina, Cicero likens himself to the mythical seer Amphiaraus, who was on his way to Thebes, fully aware of the doom that he was to encounter there (*Fam.* 6.6.6).

³⁶ Cf. *Att.* 8.2.2: ‘*urbem reliquit, id est patriam*’ for the synonymous use of *urbs* and *patria*. *Fam.* 16.12.1 to Tiro: ‘*domos nostras et patriam ipsam ... reliquimus*’, and Cicero’s statement in February (*Att.* 8.1.1) on Pompeius’ abandonment of Rome, the head (*caput*) of the nation. Pompeius is represented as deserting the body of the state, leaving behind its *membra* for death. For a detailed discussion of ‘*perfidia Pompei*’ see Holliday (1969:44-49).

³⁷ ‘*quid Pompeius agat, ne ipsum quidem scire puto; nostrum quidem nemo.*’

³⁸ Cf. *Att.* 8.7.1: ‘*ego vero quem fugiam habeo, quem sequar non habeo*’.

Cicero describes the conduct of Pompeius as unwise and without courage, and contrary to his own advice: '*nihil actum est a Pompeio nostro sapienter, nihil fortiter, addo etiam nihil ni<si> contra consilium auctoritatemque meam*'.³⁹ Three days later, on February 21, Cicero makes a distinction between the Pompeius as he presented himself in the past, or rather, what Cicero had then thought him to be, and, the present day 'deserter' of Rome:

sed cum illo Pompeio qui tum erat aut qui mihi esse videbatur; cum hoc vero qui ante fugit quam scit aut quem fugiat aut quo, qui nostra tradidit, qui patriam reliquit, Italiam relinquit ... victus sum (*Att.* 8.7.2).⁴⁰

This unfavourable picture of Pompeius as a changed man was apparently also in line with the perceptions of the majority of people of Italy. On March 1st, according to Cicero, fear compelled the people to transpose their former trust in Pompeius in favour of Caesar: '*illum quo antea confidebant metuunt, hunc amant quem timebant*' (*Att.* 8.13.2).⁴¹

Earlier in 49, in his letter to Pompeius on February 23, Cicero clearly stated his displeasure with what seemed to him a lack of responsibility in Pompeius towards the interest of the state. His disapproval now is not only with Pompeius' display of poor statesmanship, but also with his performance, as a man who lacks courage, a man who, by refusing to send reinforcements to Domitius at Corfinium (*Att.* 8.12d), actually abandons his legions 'for lack of reliable troops' (8.12c). This refusal of Pompeius' Cicero interprets as his final betrayal of *virtus* (8.8.2) and as the most dishonourable conduct (8.7.1, 8.8.1, 8.9a).

By February 27 Cicero openly admits the contradiction that exists between what he considers to be the 'ideal statesman' and that which Pompeius has become. All his past efforts to promote the power of Pompeius now seem to have been in vain, for Pompeius in fact has never given any thought to the 'great and noble work' that Cicero had envisaged him as accomplishing.⁴² Rather, it seems now as if the great general has been

³⁹ This is followed by Cicero's recital of what he considers to be the past misconduct of Pompeius (*Att.* 8.3.3).

⁴⁰ Thus we see that Cicero recognises his own inconsistent portrayal of Pompeius.

⁴¹ People seem to fear Pompeius even more than Caesar (*Att.* 8.16).

⁴² This 'noble accomplishment' is to be found outlined in *De republica*. To Atticus he writes on March 27: '*loquitur Scipio: "ut enim gubernatori cursus secundus, medico salus, imperatori*

seeking Sullan despotism all along (*Att.* 8.11.2). From Cicero's letters written to Atticus in March 49, the once-dreaded perception of the sixties of Pompeius as 'Pupil of Sulla',⁴³ re-emerges (*Att.* 9.4, 9.9). The figure of Pompeius (Cicero never calls him by name in these letters) lurks within Cicero's descriptions of a war-ridden personified Italian landscape which is being strangled in the powerful grip of famine induced by widespread pillage. The powerful general has become an angry destroyer, and matches not only the description of a returned Sulla, but also that of a vengeful Achilles.

By March 49, then, Pompeius was clearly very much out of favour with Cicero. Cicero portrays him in Sullan colours, virtually as an enemy capable of turning a Gorgon's head onto his hapless supporter:

sed vereor ne Pompeio quid oneris imponam, 'μή μοι γοργεῖν κεφαλὴν δεινοῦ πελώρου' intorqueat. mirandum enim in modum Gnaeus noster Sullani regni similitudinem concupivit. εἰδὼς σοι λέγω; nihil ille umquam minus obscure tulit (*Att.* 9.7.3).

Cicero's quotation from *Odyssey* 11.634 emphasises his sense of disillusionment and the darkened perception he now has of Pompeius. Like Odysseus in the realm of Hades, Cicero seems to experience his own personal hell, but here he had vainly waited on the appearance of exemplary heroes of the kind that used to be found in the past, only to realise that he was surrounded solely by illusions, Odyssean ghosts raising their eerie clamours (here the rumblings of war), while he himself wishes to escape this 'fate of epic proportions'. Ironically the figure of Pompeius in all his past grandeur has now become a mere shadow of what it had once been.⁴⁴ Cicero could no longer reconcile personal loyalty (the obligation he felt that he owed Pompeius) with political duty.⁴⁵

victoria, sic huic moderatori rei publicae beata civium vita proposita est, ut opibus firma, copiis locuples, gloria ampla, virtute honesta sit; huius enim operis maximi inter homines atque optimi illum esse perfectorem volo'. hoc Gnaeus noster cum antea numquam tum in hac causa minime cogitavit (*Att.* 8.11.2).

⁴³ Cf. Plut. *Sert.* 18.

⁴⁴ Cf. Lucan's depiction of Pompeius as *magni nominis umbra* (*BC* 1.135). Epic allusion was confined not only to Cicero, but featured in the ironic side remarks of his contemporaries who compared Pompeius to Agamemnon - now, in spite of all his prestige, he lacked authority among men. Cf. Cicero's admission '*quem ego hominem ἀπολιτικώτατον omnium iam ante cognoram, nunc vero etiam ἀστρατηγητότατον*' (*Att.* 8.16.1).

⁴⁵ See note 24 above.

Interestingly enough, in addition to various comparisons of Pompeius with Sulla,⁴⁶ other precedents for Pompeius as fallen hero spring to Cicero's mind, all denoting in one way or another negative associations with the misconduct of leaders against their fatherland.⁴⁷ Now that Cicero perceives that the ideal of a revived republic is to all intents and purposes dead, Cicero often uses monarchical terminology in reference to affairs of state, emphasising the final loss of the republic. In Cicero's view the issue of the continuation of the *res publica* has become of less importance to both Pompeius and Caesar; what remained was a fight in order to reign:

sed ea [re publica] **non agitur. regnandi contentio est**, in qua pulsus est modestior **rex** et probior et integrior et is, qui nisi vincit, nomen populi Romani deleatur necesse est, sin autem vincit, Sullano more exemploque vincet
(Att.10.7.1).

Pompeius may well have cherished the idea that Cicero still saw him as a remnant of the old republican order. That was the general impression that Cicero had helped to create during the sixties when he strongly supported the young Pompeius, whose remarkable military success had turned him into a popular hero.⁴⁸ Pompeius then appeared to have displayed old Roman virtues⁴⁹ in a society that was becoming increasingly morally degenerate. Cicero's emphasis on, for instance, the unique qualities of Pompeius contrasts starkly with his portrayal of the behaviour prevalent among the Roman generals of the time.⁵⁰

As will be shown below, it may not be without reason that Pompeius, in his letters of 49 to Cicero, deliberately plays on political catchwords such as *res publica* and *virtus*:

⁴⁶ Att. 8.11.2 '*Sullani regni*', Att. 9.10.2 '*Sulla potuit, ego non potero?*', Att. 10.7.1 '*Sullano more*'.

⁴⁷ Tarquinius, Coriolanus, Marius, Sulla (Att. 9.10.2).

⁴⁸ In spite of the reasons Cicero gives for his support of the Manilian law in 67, that the law was justified by the needs of the state, association with Pompeius proved also not without benefit for Cicero then. From Cicero's letters it becomes evident that Cicero himself considered his support of Pompeius as crucial towards attaining his consulship. Cicero's support for Pompeius as a general must have drawn him as mere *eques* closer to the ruling class. That is seemingly his brother Quintus' opinion on the outcome of Cicero's election campaign (*Commentariolum* 51).

⁴⁹ Cic. *Manil.* 62, Plut. *Pomp.* 1, Dio Cass. 41.13, 42.5.

⁵⁰ Cicero in this speech constantly draws attention to Pompeius' unique qualities with the frequent use of *unus* as direct contrast with the greedy, rapacious Roman generals (*Manil.* 37, 38, 40).

S. v. b. Tuas litteras libenter legi; recognovi enim tuam **pristinam virtutem** etiam in **salute communi**. consules ad eum exercitum quem in Apulia habui venerunt. magno opere te hortor pro tuo singulari perpetuoque studio in **rem publicam** ut te ad nos conferas, ut communi consilio **rei publicae adflictae** opem atque auxilium feramus (*Att.* 8.11c).

Nor is it unlikely that Pompeius is reminding Cicero of his earlier zeal, not only for the *res publica*, but also for Pompeius as a *unique* and *singularly* gifted supporter of high republican values. Pompeius' use of political catchwords as well as his apparent concern for the well-being of the state, and his use of Cicero's own familiar depiction of an 'afflicted republic', may, however, not have been enough to win Cicero over.

Pompeius' tone is therefore accordingly insistent (*magno opere te hortor*). The tone of the letter in itself is rather curt. Note that Pompeius is fairly neutral in greeting an old friend: 'I read your letter with pleasure, for (*enim*) I recognised ...' The explanation here indicates politics as the reason, not friendship. Pompeius further strongly urges Cicero to join him in consultation - a more cordial invitation might have been more persuasive in winning Cicero's compliance.

A different approach is taken by Caesar in his conciliatory letter of persuasion to Cicero in May 49. Though Caesar's real feelings toward Cicero may not have been much different from those of Pompeius, his approach is more tactful and at the same time very calculated. His constant harping on *amicitia* forms the basis of his request that Cicero should consider staying in Italy. What is usually deemed (perhaps even by Cicero himself) as vacillation in Cicero, Caesar actually seems to encourage (*Att.* 10.8b). In fact he states his approval of Cicero's consideration of neutrality as the correct course of action. He apparently exerts less pressure than did Pompeius. Also, Caesar does not refer to the *res publica* of old. The reality for him probably was that he could not (as Pompeius seems to promise), offer to uphold what he himself at the time probably considered as no longer in existence.⁵¹

When Pompeius declared that he would regard all those senators staying behind in Italy as 'traitors' and promised to punish them accordingly,⁵² Cicero could no longer easily

⁵¹ Suet. *Iul.* 77.

⁵² *Att.* 11.6.6, *Marc.* 6.18, *Caes. BC* 1.33.2.

equate patriotism with the optimate cause. Which of the two was the ‘republican side’ was not so clear. Even when Cicero had left Italy to join Pompeius, it seems that he had not so much fled to Pompeius, but was rather fleeing from the armed power that Caesar had mustered behind him (*Att.* 10.8.8), for when Cicero had joined the Pompeian camp in Greece, he could not refrain from strongly criticising his colleagues. The acerbic consular did not make himself popular with his partisans. Quintilian remarks that Pompeius was probably justified in wishing Cicero would join the enemy so that he could ‘learn to fear the Pompeians’.⁵³ So it would seem that, as had been becoming increasingly clear for the whole of the previous decade, the political suspicions of Cicero and his reluctantly embraced friend were mutual.

Within the spectrum of his own fluctuating perspectives on Pompeius, Cicero’s overall representation of the statesman appears ultimately to incline towards the negative. As indicated above, Cicero’s correspondence, especially the letters to Atticus, suggests an inability in Cicero to fathom Pompeius both as a man, and as a statesman. Given their different backgrounds, as direct opposites in the social, military and civic spheres, together with their divergent personalities, it would perhaps seem unfair to expect a strong bond of friendship, even merely political unanimity, to have developed. The fluctuating degrees of political alliance that had formed between them were therefore based mainly on political expediency at different times. Cicero in his later years clearly indicated that he had believed Pompeius never to have shown reciprocal interest in or sympathy for Cicero’s ideals of statesmanship. Rather, he had proven himself bent on gaining overweening personal power. This belief sometimes lay dormant when Cicero’s self-deception during the fifties allowed so-called personal obligation and attachment to Pompeius to cloud his long-term perspective.

Whether or not a similar situation developed in Cicero’s estimate of Caesar, is the next topic to be addressed.

⁵³

Quint. 6.3.111.

Close encounters

To the bone

9.2 Caesar's ascendancy

9.2.1 '*Voces tristificas*'

In Cicero's now fragmentary poem, *De consulatu suo*, '*voces tristificas*' refers to the prophecies of the Etruscan *haruspices* which reverberate with the political prognostications of civil war '*generosa ab stirpe*' (50). These inauspicious prognostications about looming civil war at the time of the Catilinarian conspiracy cast far reaching shadows of gloom over the *res publica*. These found expression in Cicero's perception of Caesar's political agenda, an agenda that progressively etched the ghostly silhouette of a darkening era.

As noted in the Introduction (1.2) Cicero had friends known for their interest in Etruscan lore. Although he was himself never a practicing *haruspex*, this dissertation has chosen to depict Cicero in these terms. His reading of Julius Caesar is perhaps the best example of Cicero's ability to predict the future ascribed to him by ancient commentators.

Plutarch (*Caes.* 4) records that, according to ancient perceptions, Cicero was considered to be the first to have detected the danger of Caesar's political agenda, an agenda supposedly feared by Cicero 'as one might fear the smiling surface of the sea'. On the other hand, Cicero also appears to have found it 'unimaginable', so Plutarch, that one who looked and acted as Caesar did, was capable of destroying the republic. Macrobius, too, gives an anecdote ascribed to Cicero that seems to indicate his notions concerning the deceit inherent in Caesar, a perceived deceit that was obscured beneath an unusual senatorial tunic,¹ which hung loosely around him and fringed his hands. Suetonius similarly mentions an anecdote suggesting that Sulla, likewise, was continually warning the optimates to guard against 'the boy with his loose dress'.² Dress code apart, Caesar, unlike Pompeius, who skirted between populist and optimate politics in an apparently

¹ Macr. *Sat.* 2.3.9 '*praecinctura* [Caesaris] *me deceptit*'.

² Suet. *Iul.* 45.3: '*male praecinctum puerum*'. Cf. Dio Cassius 43.43.5 who quotes Cicero expressing his disbelief in the capability of one so poorly dressed as Caesar to defeat Pompeius.

shabby fashion, consistently favoured the texture of populist politics. It is in Caesar's deliberate choice to follow the vogue of such populist politics (the leading fashion of the late republican political scene) that the 'unusual dress' of Caesar distinguished itself from the ruling elite, and he ultimately refashioned the senatorial order. To what extent the authenticity of the above anecdotes is to be trusted is uncertain,³ however, we do have Cicero explicitly stating in his private letters his distrust of Caesar's practice of populist politics.

From the mid-sixties onwards Cicero and Caesar find themselves opposing each other on different sides of the Roman political spectrum. As early as 63 Cicero suspects that Caesar, though never openly involved (and so, too, Crassus) supported the electoral campaign of Antonius and Catiline with the intention to use them as political tools against the senate.⁴ The same year saw the proposal of the Rullan legislation which was, according to Cicero, designed to set up colonies along all the main roads to Rome and to provide land for Pompeius' veterans and those dispossessed by Sulla. Pompeius and Crassus were clearly to benefit the most from such legislation. This 'irresponsible law' according to Cicero in *De lege agraria* was promulgated by 'certain individuals' in the background who desired absolute power (*reges* 15, *dominos* 20), aimed at overthrowing the state (77) and forming an *altera Roma* against the present Rome (86).⁵ Cicero succeeded in gaining negative emotional support against the proposal and Rullus did not even attempt to bring the motion to the vote.

The year 63 subsequently produced more danger signals, when Caesar opposed the senatorial order by giving evidence against the senator Gaius Calpurnius Piso (*cos.* 67) who was tried for extortion.⁶ Later, during the trial of the senator Gaius Rabirius who was prosecuted for high treason 37 years *post eventum*,⁷ Caesar, with the help of the tribune

³ There seems to have existed in antiquity a collection of Cicero's jokes compiled by Tiro and mentioned by Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.5 and Macr. *Sat.* 2.1.12.

⁴ Ascon. *In toga candida* fr. 1.

⁵ This dangerous situation was to materialise in 59 when Caesar laid the foundation for his future 'other Rome' by implementing the aims of the Rullan law through his agrarian settlement acts. Cf. Suet. *Iul.* 79 for the rumours prevalent amongst the populace indicating the possible transfer of the seat of power from Rome to the East, Caesar's founding of Capua as an alternative Rome *Phil.* 12.7.15, also Vasaly's discussion (1988:231-43) of the *topos* '*altera Roma*'.

⁶ Sall. *Cat.* 49.2.

⁷ Rabirius was allegedly implicated in the murder of Saturninus in 100 BC.

T. Labienus, proposed the resurrection of the death penalty by scourging and crucifixion. Rabirius, however, was acquitted as the result of Cicero's defence. At the end of 63, when Caesar suggested that the property of conspirators in the Catiline affair was not to be confiscated, public outcry against him became so threatening that he had to be escorted to safety from the temple of Concord and for the remaining weeks of the year did not again attend the senate. Thus Cicero could claim to have successfully opposed Caesar during his consular year.

In 59, under the sway of the triumvirate, the tables were turned in Caesar's favour. Cicero was soon to experience the offence taken by both Caesar and Pompeius when he complains about the political situation during his defence of Gaius Antonius (*cos.* 63). The result of his outspokenness was that Clodius received the blessing of both triumvirs for his adoption into the plebeian order, leaving Cicero as a helpless spectator expressing his unease as a sedative for his own fears.⁸ To Atticus he reports the people's negative reaction against the triumvirs and the joy they displayed when reading Bibulus' slanderous pamphlets commenting on Caesar's past.⁹ This seems to have been Bibulus' way of trying to sway public opinion against his all-powerful colleague.

By May 59 Cicero foresaw that the alliance between Pompeius, Crassus and Caesar would lead to future autocracy, since the senate meetings were increasingly badly attended, apparently out of fear of Caesar's soldiers (*Att.* 2.24.4). An increasingly fearful picture of Caesar the 'autocrat and cruel tyrant' in the typical literary mode, in contrast to the concept of the 'good king', seems to take shape in Cicero's mind. By July he believes L. Vettius to be an agent of Caesar's (*Att.* 2.24.2), whose own motive for being involved in the Vettius affair (during which allegations of a conspiracy to murder Pompeius were made), remains uncertain.¹⁰ In his defence of Lucius Flaccus Cicero is bold enough to criticise the populist tactics of the 'despots' as a danger to the harmony of the orders (*Flacc.* 94-105) as this was propagated during Cicero's consular year.

⁸ *Dom.* 41; Dio Cass. 38.11.2.

⁹ *Att.* 2.18.1, 19.3, 21.4.

¹⁰ Three years later Cicero is convinced of Vatinius' role in the murder of his informant Vettius who was prepared to disclose the names of the alleged conspirators to him (*Vat.* 26).

Cicero's opposition to the triumvirate and especially to Caesar was no clearer when he declined a post as *legatus* on Caesar's staff in 58, as well as a position in the commission of twenty that was to implement Caesar's settlement act. This bold opposition to the triumvirs was reprised in full when Cicero's exile came into being and promises from both Caesar and Pompeius failed to materialise (*Qfr.* 1.2.16). Caesar's forgiveness (*Sest.* 71) took a considerable time to surface, as shown in his lack of enthusiasm for Cicero's recall.¹¹

By 56 it was clear to Cicero that Caesar was a political force to be reckoned with and he capitulated, probably under pressure from Pompeius to participate in a public reconciliation with Caesar. Cicero complied by composing a speech in which he lauded Caesar's Gallic achievements (very likely the *De provinciis consularibus* to which he refers as his 'παλινῳδίαν' in *Att.* 4.5.1), but in private Cicero remarked that this compliance of his was a personal embarrassment to him (*Att.* 4.6.2). His conscience was slightly eased by arguing that his reconciliation with Caesar was in line with the sentiments displayed by the senatorial order, and that he was echoing the opinion of the Roman people.¹²

The despondency that Cicero displayed throughout 56, in his perception that the Roman ancestral tradition had in effect been 'murdered' by the resurrection of the alliance of the triumvirs,¹³ seems by 54 to have been replaced by optimism. That was probably as a result of Caesar's patronage of Cicero's brother Quintus and his prolonged absence from the senate. It seems likely that geographical distance had a salubrious effect on the relationship between Caesar and Cicero. During his absence, Caesar, in Cicero's view, seems to have treated him as his intellectual and political equal (*Fam.* 1.9.11), unlike the optimates by birth (the 'boni'), Cicero's political friends. Caesar appears to have corresponded quite frequently with Cicero during his campaign in Britain,¹⁴ and even to have dedicated two grammatical works to Cicero, hailing him as 'creator and master' of Latin prose (*Brut.* 253).

¹¹ *Prov. Cons.* 43, *Har. Resp.* 46, *Balb.* 59, *Fam.* 1.9.9.

¹² *Prov. Cons.* 25, *Planc.* 93.

¹³ In his prosecution of Vatinius Cicero described him (as promoter of Caesar's provincial laws) as follows: 'esne igitur patriae certissimus parricida?' (*Vat.* 35).

¹⁴ *Qfr.* 3.1.17, *Att.* 4.18.5.

This friendly relationship suffered a serious setback in 49. The more positive estimate of Caesar that Cicero seems to have developed during the late fifties was more than just superficial, and Cicero could not but have seriously considered a shift of allegiance in the light of his deteriorating relationship with Pompeius. In August 50 Caesar is presented as the one who is making peace overtures: Caesar proposed joint disarmament (so Caelius *Fam.* 8.14.2) whereas Pompeius refused all proposals for compromise, which subsequently proved Cicero's unofficial peace talks with him as having been unsuccessful.¹⁵ However, Cicero's contempt for Caesar returned when he crossed the Rubicon. Now Cicero openly accuses Caesar as being responsible for the outbreak of civil war.¹⁶ The perception that Caesar is aiming at sole rule, Cicero, quoting Euripides, reveals in an emotionally charged letter to Atticus late in January: 'τὴν θεῶν μέγιστην ὥστ' ἔχειν τυραννίδα?'¹⁷ Nevertheless, Cicero also records Caesar's attempts at peaceful compromise after the Rubicon crossing, when he was prepared to give up his provinces and present himself in person for the elections in return for the senate's lifting of the *senatus consultum ultimum* against him, as well as for Pompeius' agreement to give up his army. Such a compromise would, so Caesar promised, enable free elections and would leave the senate in power.¹⁸

Cicero apparently could neither bring himself to trust the benevolent overtures of Caesar, of whom he now conceived as a '*perditum latronum*' (*Att.* 7.18.2), nor his '*insidiosa clementia*' (*Att.* 8.16.2) and he felt very uncomfortable with the idea that the people in the country towns were treating Caesar as a 'god' (*Att.* 8.16, 9.15). By May 49 Cicero seems to have accepted the fact that Caesar was establishing a 'tyranny' when he confides to Atticus, that he foresees the downfall of Caesar (10.8.6). Considering the precepts of Platonic thought on tyranny '*illa auguria Platonis de tyrannis*' (10.8.7), he predicts that it is inevitable that Caesar, despite his success, will become the object of hate. It now becomes evident that Cicero considers Caesar to be the greater of the two evils, the lesser being Pompeius. Caesar, like Pompeius, is also not what he pretends to be, now that he has shown his true colours by becoming the embodiment of Sulla. Whereas Cicero

¹⁵ *Att.* 8.11d, 9.11a, *Fam.* 4.1.1, 6.21.1, 7.3.2.

¹⁶ Cf. his letter to Tiro (*Fam.* 16.11.2) on January 12.

¹⁷ *Att.* 7.11.1, Eur. *Phoen.* 509.

¹⁸ *Att.* 7.14.1, *Fam.* 16.12.3, Caes. *BC* 1.9.

always suspected Pompeius of intending to emulate Sulla, Caesar indeed seems to have become a true Sulla.¹⁹

By 47 Cicero, deeply depressed by the political situation, writes to Varro informing him of his intention to compose works on the republican constitution as an alternative means of influencing public affairs; at the same time he invites Varro to join him in this endeavour.²⁰ The latter, however, decides to join the ranks of Caesar. During 46 Cicero seems once again to have cherished the thought of rebuilding the state under Caesar; probably Caesar's policy of reconciliation and clemency was beginning to show results. In the *Brutus*, for instance, Cicero emphasises the idea that the orator as statesman has a duty to ensure the existence of a free state, and his eulogy to Cato could be taken as a statement of the need for an optimate revival. By this time Cicero also seems fully aware of the dangers of speaking too loosely in opposing Caesar. In July 46, during Caesar's dictatorship, Cicero, perceiving that his former freedom is eluding him, remarks to Paetus that he himself, the *sapiens*, needs to refrain from any foolhardy talk or action against those in power (*Fam.* 9.16.5), whose rule he in September describes in a letter to Marcellus as an 'arbitrary monarchy' (4.9.2). Also in July 46 Cicero complains to Volumnius Eutrapelus about the government which inhibits his oratorical talent, degrading it into mere declamation. Here Cicero identifies himself with the mythical Philoctetes:

'pinnigero, non armigero in corpore tela exerceantur', ut ait Philoctetes apud Accium, 'abiecta gloria' (*Fam.* 7.33.1).²¹

Like Philoctetes, who was left behind on Lemnos suffering from a festering wound, no longer able to fight the enemy with his arrows, but instead had to shoot birds for the pot for the sake of self-preservation, Cicero, in his present situation, while enduring the oppressive rule of Caesar, is unable to use his talent to make a significant difference in society. In fact he sees himself as totally insignificant and stripped of all his former glory. It is tempting to see a rather convoluted metaphorical application of myth: Cicero's darts

¹⁹ In August 47 Cicero alludes to a presumably positive comparison made by Atticus between the Caesarian regime and that of Sulla. For Cicero, however, the association remains negative (*Att.* 11.21.3). Cf. *Har. Resp.* 54: Sulla possessed monarchical power '*sine dubio habuit regalem potestatem*', *Dom.* 43. For Pompeius in Sullan colours cf. *Att.* 8.11.2, 9.10.2, 10.7.1.

²⁰ *Fam.* 9.2.5.

²¹ Accius *fr.* 555-6. 'clad in feathers, not armour, I wield these weapons, with glory cast away'.

are now merely keeping him alive, but the thing that keeps him helpless is a 'festering wound' - his way by now of viewing Caesar's role in the body politic. However, this 'affliction', symbolic of an atrophied *res publica*²² for which Cicero expresses mourning on many occasions during August and September of this year,²³ has to be endured.

Amidst complaints that Caesar was allowing the signing of his (Cicero's) name to senatorial decrees without his own approval (*Fam.* 9.15.4), Cicero strenuously praises the dictator. But even his praise of Caesar is ironically qualified in the letters to former Pompeians. In a letter of condolence written to Caecina during October 46 Cicero even calls Caesar a clever, far-sighted, if not merciful person (*Fam.* 6.6.8-9), who will certainly see the *usefulness* of someone such as Caecina as a tool for propaganda.²⁴ This outward attitude of compliance on Cicero's part was soon to change in 45 when he himself was in serious need of consolation.

9.2.2 'Hanc tristitiam temporum'

The letters of 45, at the time when Cicero was devastated by the death of his daughter Tullia in February, give vent to Cicero's psychological response to his bereavement in a variety of emotions that alternate between moods of hopelessness, defeat, disinterest and discontent. Correspondingly these vacillating emotions also reflect Cicero's attitude of political despair during this period of severe personal trauma. An indication of the intensity of his resentment of the present regime, especially in the letters to Atticus, becomes evident from Atticus' concerned insistence (from late March onwards)²⁵ that

²² Cf. Cicero's description of the debilitated state of the *res publica* in his letter to L. Lucceius: '*quid est enim non ita adfectum ut id non deletum extinctumque esse fateare? circumspice omnia membra rei publicae, quae notissima sunt tibi; nullum reperies profecto quod non fractum debilitatumve sit*' (*Fam.* 5.13.3).

²³ During August to Paetus (*Fam.* 9.19) and to M. Curius (*Fam.* 7.28), and during September his remark to Sulpicius Rufus on the utter loss of the *res publica* and despair of its recovery. Concern for the *res publica* is shared by former Pompeians like L. Lucceius who, according to Cicero, once urged him in a political letter of consolation not to despair utterly (*Fam.* 5.13).

²⁴ Caecina proceeded to fulfil Caesar's expectations - he wrote a book, probably verse (*Querelarum*), to make amends for his previous libel against Caesar during the war (*Fam.* 6.6.8). This was shortly afterwards followed by another literary endeavour which apparently contained praise of both Cicero and Caesar, but which could also give offence (so Caecina fretfully declared) to Caesar (*Fam.* 6.7.1-4).

²⁵ '*Quod me ad meam consuetudinem revocas*' (*Att.* 12.28.2), '*quod me a maestitia <a> vocas*' (*Att.* 12.37a). Cf. *Att.* 12.38a.1, 12.40.2.

Cicero should temper his careless display of political discontent and return to his seemingly compliant political position of 46.²⁶ However, Cicero, now well past his initial period of intense mourning,²⁷ is unable to find consolation for this personal loss, for him commensurate with the political loss which in 54 he still could rationalise. At that time the memory of his glorious consulship was compensation enough for a defunct republic, which then already gave him neither joy nor solace.²⁸

As previously, during his exile and the mid-fifties when he was politically marginalised, Cicero's bleak political outlook matches his sombre state of mind about personal matters. Cicero appears to experience his present existence as virtual death and finds himself surrounded by Caesar's supporters, to him (as to Atticus) a ghastly Odyssean *νέκυια* (underworld),²⁹ where the Caesarian forum has become an unpleasant place which is to be avoided, and the senate house is crowded with people not to Cicero's liking.³⁰ This perception of himself as having joined the dead (*occidimus, occidimus, Attice*),³¹ becomes acute during the second half of March³² when he confesses that the experience of bereavement, now that he has lost his only anchor in life (Tullia), has sharpened his view that he, himself, has in fact been dead for a long time.³³ Political loss (the republic as Cicero had known it) together with personal loss (Tullia's death) therefore, as in the past, is experienced by Cicero in tandem. On March 24 Cicero claims that his past practice of bewailing the sorry state of the republic was then less intense for he then had Tullia as a

²⁶ As a man of business Atticus was probably naturally concerned that Cicero's present negativism could jeopardise his own financial dealings, which after that also involved Caesarians whom Atticus had befriended over the years, for instance, Oppius and Balbus, with whom he had had business dealings ever since 51 BC (*Att.* 12.3.2, 12.29.2, 13.1.3).

²⁷ No account of Cicero's early period of mourning survives. The first extant letter of this period, that breaks Cicero's virtual isolation from public, is dated March 7, written from his villa at Astura (*Att.* 12.13). It mainly concerns matters of business. Though Cicero displays an aggrieved and depressed state of mind, the intention expressed to purchase a place of refuge where he could come to terms with his pain and grief, signals a process of recovery. Cf. Treggiari's discussion (1998:16-23) of Cicero's reaction to the death of Tullia.

²⁸ *Att.* 4.18.

²⁹ Hom. *Od.* 11. Cf. *Att.* 9.11.2 and below Chapter Ten section one, note 19.

³⁰ '*quid enim mihi foro sine iudiciis, sine curia, in oculos incurrentibus iis quos animo aequo videre non possum ?*' (*Att.* 12.21.5). Cf. *Att.* 12.23.1 where Cicero prefers the Caesarians, whom he finds at present very annoying, to remain at a distance. By implication their presence in Rome would become unbearable.

³¹ *Att.* 12.23.1.

³² Note that Cicero two days previously, on March 17, described himself as a suffering patient, a brave invalid (*fortis aegroti*) on the brink of collapse (*Att.* 12.21.5).

³³ '*iam pridem nos quidem, sed nunc fatemur, postea quam unum quo tenebamur amisimus*' (*Att.* 12.23.1).

source of comfort.³⁴ By May 9 Cicero, in a painstakingly difficult effort to compose a letter of advice to a Caesar whom he cannot bring himself to praise (Συμβουλευτικὸν *saepe conor. nihil reperio*), comments that he has lost the former veneer of optimism that had once covered his pessimistic political outlook, and emphasises that during these times of woe (*hanc tristitiam temporum*) it is not inappropriate for him to despair. A series of forlorn questions conveys the sense of mourning (*ne doleam? qui potest? ne iaceam?*).³⁵

On May 14 Cicero appears to have regained some of his former composure when he mentions to Atticus that he has taken his advice and has successfully composed a ‘useful letter’ to Caesar which he has not yet dispatched (13.26.2).³⁶ This letter was probably composed as an act of self-preservation, for the letters written during May in general are not void of his usual snide remarks about Caesar.³⁷ Cicero himself betrays his doubts about the sincerity of the sentiments displayed in this letter, when he admits that the sentiment portrayed in this letter as expected from a loyal citizen fully complies with what is required by the political circumstances of the day and that he now heeds expert political advice (πολιτικοὶ *praecipunt*).³⁸ How close to this political common sense Cicero kept is uncertain, but the modifications required by Oppius and Balbus (who supposedly disapproved of the content of the letter) finally led to Cicero’s decision on May 25 to abandon the effort (*Att.* 13.27.1). On the next day, from his villa at Tusculum, Cicero, having decided that it was better not to write anything than to elicit disapproval, makes scathing remarks (*Att.* 13.28.3) about what he perceives as Caesar’s regal aspirations (*hunc pompa, Quirini contubernalem*). To him, Caesar is emulating Alexander in tyranny (*ipsum illum Aristoteli discipulum ... postea rex appellatus sit, superbum, crudelem, immoderatum fuisse*).³⁹ By May 28 Cicero apparently has decided to put the unpleasantness of this letter behind him and heed his own advice by refraining

³⁴ ‘fuit meum quidem iam pridem rem publicam lugere, quod faciebam, sed mitius; erat enim ubi acquiescerem’ (*Att.* 12.28.2).

³⁵ *Att.* 12.40.2, 3.

³⁶ ‘heri etiam effeci epistulam ad Caesarem; tibi enim placebat. quam non fuit malum scribi, si forte opus esse putares’.

³⁷ On May 17 Cicero alludes to Caesar’s statue near Atticus’ house as his personified neighbour whose presence could bring on financial gain: ‘domum tuam pluris video futuram vicino Caesare’ (*Att.* 12.48.1), and later in the day remarks on the appropriateness of Caesar and Quirinus sharing the same abode (*Att.* 12.45.2). Three days later Caesar is depicted as the illustrious, all powerful relation (*Caesaris, propinqui eius, omnis potestas esset, viri optimi et hominis liberalissimi*) of the impostor ‘Marius’ whom Cicero refuses to defend (*Att.* 12.49.2).

³⁸ *Att.* 12.51.2.

³⁹ *Att.* 13.28.3.

from criticism of Caesar. He would rather keep a low profile that would at least create the illusion of freedom (*neque est facturus quicquam nisi de meo consilio. obsecro, abiciamus ista et semiliberi saltem simus; quod adsequemur et tacendo et latendo*).⁴⁰

During the latter part of May Cicero seems to have recovered from his state of utter depression and during June started to display his former political alertness. By June 10 Cicero had received news that Caesar had decided not to venture on the Parthian expedition, but to stay in Rome enforcing his laws.⁴¹ A week later, on June 18, when the news of the assassination of Marcellus at Piraeus becomes public, Cicero concludes that perilous times were not something of the past and that those on the wrong side of the one in power should expect danger from any quarter (*omnia igitur metuenda*).⁴² Cicero appears not alarmed⁴³ when confronted with the cryptic remark of Atticus that he, Cicero, was the last surviving consular (*reliquum consularem*) of a former dispensation, and denigrates the remark as a historical slip (*παρὰ τὴν ἱστορίαν*) made by Atticus.⁴⁴ He does, however, acknowledge that there is cause for general alarm, implying that something of the kind was to be expected under the current political circumstances. His choice of words thus gains ironic significance when he describes the event of Marcellus' death as 'unprecedented' and 'apparently abnormal'.⁴⁵ Although Caesar did not seem to have been involved in the murder there must have been talk to the contrary.⁴⁶ Cicero, for instance, does not seem to understand certain remarks of Brutus concerning the alleged 'madness' of the assassin P. Magius Cilo, a client of Marcellus', who apparently had had

⁴⁰ Att. 13.31.2.

⁴¹ Att. 13.7.

⁴² Att. 13.10.1.

⁴³ Cicero's comment becomes bitter irony in a world where the living are as impotent as the dead (those consuls of the past who represented the traditional republican order before Caesar had triumphed). Neither tradition nor the present upholders of tradition pose any real threat to the omnipresent Caesar: '*quamquam hoc nullam ad partem valet scilicet, mihi praesertim qui non minus bene actum cum illis putem*' (Att. 13.10.1).

⁴⁴ The remark should perhaps not be taken at face value. Atticus may have had reason for concern, given Cicero's past criticism against the present government and his friendship with Marcellus. He may also through his financial involvement with various Caesarians have had information not disclosed to Cicero. Cicero, whether he chose to acknowledge it or not, was symbolically the last remnant of the traditional republican order.

⁴⁵ '*quis enim hoc timeret quod neque acciderat antea nec videbatur natura ferre ut accidere posset?*' (Att. 13.10.1).

⁴⁶ Brutus allegedly wrote to Cicero that Caesar was not to blame: '*per litteras purgat Caesarem de interitu Marcelli*' (Att. 13.10.3).

a disagreement with him on some matter, and he makes it clear that many questions about the event remain unanswered.

By mid July, despite receipt of a letter of consolation on the death of Tullia dispatched from Spain by Caesar in April already (*Att.* 13.20), Cicero persists with his emotionally-laden criticism of Caesar now painting a picture of an overbearing megalomaniac despot,⁴⁷ and displays apparently childish satisfaction on hearing that some people withheld their applause during the *ludi circensis* when Caesar's statue accompanied those of the gods (*Att.* 13.44.1).

Probably around mid August when rumours (current since May 45) still had it that Cicero concealed a secret agenda against Caesar,⁴⁸ Cicero was forced to reassure Caesar about his basic goodwill. His letter of commendation written to Caesar⁴⁹ could be seen as a tactic to reassure Caesar of his own compliance with (or non-opposition to) his rule. By August 13 Cicero informs Atticus that he has acted on his advice, and has, as a matter of urgency, drafted something in writing (*Att.* 13.47.1). This composition could be the letter

⁴⁷ Cf. Cicero's criticism of a decision made by Caesar to enlarge the city of Rome, which, according to Cicero, had become too small for Caesar's preference (*Att.* 13.35-6.1).

⁴⁸ Quintus junior, for instance, accused Cicero and warned Caesar against him (*Att.* 12.7.1, 13.37.2, 9.11, 12.38, 13.9.1, 13.29.3). Cf. Shackleton Bailey *Ad familiares* vol. 2 p. 458.

⁴⁹ This letter is generally placed in the period March 45 (Tyrrell and Purser 1897: vol. 5 p. 42, Shuckburgh though with reservations 1900: vol. 3 p. 228) on the basis that Cicero greets Caesar with the title *imperator* with which he was acclaimed on February 9 the same year. In contrast with Tyrrell and Purser, who read a 'strained and unnatural tone of gaiety' which conceals 'an aching heart' into the letter, probably as an expression of Cicero's grief over the death of Tullia, Schmidt (1893:275) found the letter too light-hearted for someone deeply in mourning. Shackleton Bailey places it in late spring or early summer, probably May, as Cicero's possible retaliation against the malign accusations of young Quintus against himself. However, several factors suggest the likelihood of an even later date in August: During May Cicero displayed considerable reluctance to write a letter of advice to Caesar (*Att.* 12.40.2, 13.28.2, 13.31.3). In reaction to the disapproval Cicero's effort eventually elicited from both Oppius and Balbus, he abandoned the undertaking (*Att.* 13.27) on May 25. Cicero regarded the letter of advice uncalled for: '*totis igitur litteris nihil opus est*' (1), for, in his view, Caesar could interpret such a letter as Cicero's atonement for his '*Cato*' written earlier. Cicero explicitly says that he did not previously write to Caesar in this vein: '*cum antea nihil scripserim*', and that for that very reason Caesar could think that Cicero was just awaiting the outcome of the final stage of the war before putting his hand to paper. By June 24 Cicero still (this time at the request of Dolabella) found it difficult to produce something with political overtures to Caesar in writing (*Att.* 13.13-14.2), thinking himself unable to escape criticism. News received some time during the latter part of June about the death of Marcellus could have been an incentive for Cicero to reconsider overtures towards Caesar. Frequent requests for news about Caesar's return increase in Cicero's letters to Atticus in late June (*Att.* 13.13-14.5, 13.16.2, 13.17, 13.21a.3), and by July 2 he mentions receipt of Caesar's letter of consolation to him (*Att.* 13.20.1). Though Cicero still during August felt it unsafe to openly speak his mind on political matters '*non licet scilicet sententiam suam*', the general tone of the letters seems to become more positive in outlook.

to Caesar whose imminent return, according to Balbus, had been relayed to Cicero on the previous day (*Att.* 13.46.1). The light-hearted tone of the letter (*Att.* 13.47) on August 13 is consistent with that of *Fam.* 13.15 (the letter to Caesar) as with the letters written on August 11 and 12.⁵⁰ The letter to Caesar (*Fam.* 13.15) was probably written either on the same day (August 11) as *Att.* 13.45, or very soon afterwards.

The letter to Atticus seems to convey a reluctant and forced willingness in Cicero to adopt an attitude of reconciliation (sincere or not) towards Caesar, whose imminent return still perturbs Cicero. At this time, however, he apparently may have decided to accept the role of attentive but reluctant pupil awaiting instruction by Dolabella, a most offensive teacher (*o magistrum molestum!*),⁵¹ who supposedly was acting on the orders of another *magister*.⁵² Viewed in this light, Cicero's allusion to Agamemnon's summons (*Att.* 13.45.1) becomes symbolic of his intended obedience to the new teacher. In this willingness to answer to the call of 'Agamemnon',⁵³ one could see a possible allusion to himself as a 'Kalchas' being summoned to the presence of the 'king'.⁵⁴ This intention to react sooner rather than later (*extemplo*) could be an indication of a new phase in Cicero's recovery from his depression of early 45. By August Cicero had reached a compromise with Oppius and Balbus about resuming his attendance in the senate when circumstances called for it.⁵⁵ He now seemingly intended to play a less prominent political role behind the scenes, either in an advisory capacity to Caesar himself, or, if that proved

⁵⁰ *Att.* 13.45, 13.46. In *Att.* 13.45.1 Cicero mentions that his 'holiday' is extended: '*dies feriarum mihi additos video*', very likely a jocular allusion to the uncertain date of Caesar's return. More definite information about his return Cicero felt could be forthcoming from one Baebius and Atticus' 'other neighbour' Egnatius (*de Baebio poteris et de altero vicino Egnatio*), who was possibly a Caesarian sympathiser. Cicero previously alluded to Caesar as represented by his statue as Atticus' neighbour (*Caesare vicino* 12.45.2).

⁵¹ *Att.* 13.47. Cf. Cicero's opinion on the role reversal of Dolabella, his former student, now transformed into an inadequate 'teacher' in his letter to Varro in May 46 (*Fam.* 9.7.2).

⁵² For Caesar as *magister* cf. *Fam.* 7.25.1.

⁵³ '*Postea quam abs te, Agamemno, ut venirem*' ... '*tetigit auris nuntius, extemplo*'. This fragment remains '*ex incertis incertorum fabulis*', so Ribbeck *Trag. Fr.* ³ p. 237, and Shackleton Bailey *Letters to Atticus* vol. 5 p. 385. However, the quotation does not exclude allusion to Greek plays. We know that Cicero shows familiarity with quotations from, for instance, the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. Cf. *Qfr.* 3.4.6, Aesch. *Ag.* 375.

⁵⁴ Earlier, on July 14 Cicero apparently refers to a rumour concerning L. Aurelius Cotta (*cos.* 65) who allegedly intended to propose to the senate that Caesar be given the title 'king' as a prerequisite to conquering Parthia (Cic. *Div.* 2.110, Suet. *Iul.* 79.3, App. *BC* 2.110, Dio 44.15.3).

⁵⁵ *Att.* 13.47a.1.

unsuccessful, resorting to an agenda of veiled criticism and recourse to writing works with political undertones.⁵⁶

Cicero's letter to Caesar as his first option and as an act of reconciliation heralds a new approach towards Caesar as ruler. A striking feature of this unusual letter is the high incidence of appropriate Homeric quotations used by Cicero.⁵⁷ These quotations accentuate the difference between past and present conduct on Cicero's part, probably indicative of a profound change of attitude in Cicero and his willingness to co-operate with Caesar. In this letter Cicero commends one Precilius who used to criticise Cicero in the past for not siding with Caesar. Once Precilius was as unable to persuade Cicero as were both Kalypso and Kirke to persuade Odysseus,⁵⁸ for Cicero in the past listened to those who incited him to a bold pursuit of glory⁵⁹ and he, Cicero, had heeded, to his detriment.⁶⁰ This Cicero now claims to Caesar he no longer does '*sed me minus iam movent, ut vides*'. Now that Cicero has discarded both the former instigators of glory and his former self, once consumed by the fire of glory '*hominem perustum*' (Fam. 13.15.2), he is free to venture onto a new path, armed with the sober maxims of Euripides. Cicero assures Caesar of his intention to replace his former Homeric grandiloquence, his Hektor *persona* with Euripidean (i.e. Caesarian) maxims. He proves this with a quotation from Euripides: 'μισῶ σοφιστήν, ὅστις οὐχ αὐτῷ σοφός' (2),⁶¹ implying that the sage who cannot guide himself wisely, his wisdom is scorned.⁶² Cicero here seems to reassure Caesar that his wisdom (ἄμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω), the ability to see both before and

⁵⁶ For instance, *Fin.* 1.35 and *Tusc.* 1.116 carry political messages: respectively the need to sacrifice the individual for the sake of public benefit, and that tyrannicide is not justifiable.

⁵⁷ Shuckburgh (1900:229) considers these quotations, an 'accumulation of not very apt tags from Homer', as an embarrassing display of flippancy on Cicero's part, 'not the sort of letter which one would expect to be written to the head of state' and fails to see that this 'one-off' letter, 'very unlike even the most off-hand of Cicero's letters', is exceptional for its very appropriateness to the political situation that Cicero has to deal with.

⁵⁸ Fam. 13.15.1 'ἀλλ' ἐμὸν οὐ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔπειθεν.' In the palace of Alcinous Odysseus informs Arete of Kalypso's unsuccessful bid to win him over (*Od.* 7.258). Cf. *Od.* 9.33 Odysseus adamantly declares to Alcinous that neither Kirke nor Kalypso won his heart.

⁵⁹ 'ἄλκιμος ἔσσι', ἵνα τίς σε καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἐν εἴπῃ.' *Od.* 1.302 Athena to Telemachus: 'be strong, for unborn men will speak well of you'.

⁶⁰ 'ὧς φάτο, τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα.' *Od.* 24.315 of Laertes – 'he spoke, and black clouds of pain fell upon him'.

⁶¹ Eur. *fr.* 905 Nauck.

⁶² Cf. Cicero's letter to Trebatius in May 45 (Fam. 7.6) where Cicero quotes Medea: 'he who cannot help himself, although wise, his wisdom is in vain'.

behind, does not exclude distinction nor excellence above the rest (*Il.* 6.208, 11.784).⁶³ Cicero thus implies that he could see what lay in the past as well as what the Romans were to face in the future. Such a man could only be regarded as an asset to any government.

This quotation from *Il.* 11.784 gains in significance if the context of Nestor's speech to Patroklos is taken into consideration, which recalls an earlier incident when he spoke to both Achilles and Patroklos. Then Peleus exhorted Achilles to always strive toward excellence and to outdo the best, while Menoetius advised Patroklos to counsel Achilles with sound advice. Being the elder of the two, Patroklos could guide Achilles, who was of nobler birth and the stronger, to lead to his own advantage. Nestor's advice here is to remind Patroklos of his father's precepts: to try and influence an Achilles who 'may still have enough sense to listen' to good counsel. In recalling Nestor's speech by allusion to *Iliad* 11, Cicero may very likely be doing so as a ploy to relay a message to Caesar, who, as a former fellow student of Molon, would be expected to recognise the various implications of the Homeric allusions hinted at in this letter. Most significantly, it could appear that Cicero is offering himself to Caesar in the capacity of friend as well as counsellor, a 'Patroklos' to an 'Achilles victorious'. This act in itself is reminiscent of Cicero's action in the past when he made similar overtures to Pompeius in 62,⁶⁴ and offered himself as a political ally to Pompeius, while offering to act towards Pompeius as a 'Laelius' once did to a 'Scipio'. The somewhat light-hearted tone of this letter should therefore not be taken at face value, for it could also disguise an underlying warning directed at Caesar not to follow the example of Pompeius, who in the past shunned Cicero's offer of friendship and ignored his advice.

Cicero's unusual letter of commendation⁶⁵ thus becomes Cicero's own recommendation of himself to Caesar. With this extraordinary letter to Caesar, Cicero could create the impression of an amicable relationship with Caesar, the type of relationship usually associated with the exchange of *litterae commendaticiae*. Whether it was written in all

⁶³ 'αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων.'

⁶⁴ *Fam.* 5.7.

⁶⁵ 'genere novo sum litterarum ad te usus, ut intellegeres, non vulgarem esse, commendationem' (*Fam.* 13.15.3).

sincerity, or as an act of self-preservation to counter rumours about his hostility towards Caesar, remains a matter of speculation.

In this apparent pretence of subservience at a time of political uncertainty, we may find the seed from which the cultivation of Cicero's subsequent *modus operandi* took root. It must be remembered that at this time Cicero's personal life was disrupted. He was personally isolated after his divorce from his long term confidante, Terentia, his finances were in disarray, and his hasty remarriage and subsequent divorce from Publilia did not ease tensions. By this time, too, his brother and his nephew had gone over to the Caesarian camp.

The simulation of compliance with his relatives as well as with those in power appears to have been foremost on Cicero's mind and seems largely to have worked as sublimation of his mourning for Tullia. The sequence of letters of August 14 – 18 reveals Cicero's preoccupation with the question of deception.⁶⁶ Although these letters are mainly about Cicero's nephew young Quintus,⁶⁷ one may suspect that Cicero's quotation of Pindar on August 15 also reflects on the political atmosphere of the time: 'πότερον δίκᾳ τεῖχος ὕψιον ... σκολιαῖς ἀπάταις'⁶⁸ (shall I reach the higher stronghold by taking the path of justice or by deceit?). Contemplating Pindar's (and Plato's) advice, Cicero could have reasoned (in the light of recent events) that the path of justice usually did not lead to advantage, but brought only disadvantage and problems. By resorting to deceit, and if Cicero followed the cunning ways of the fox,⁶⁹ the outcome of events could then only prove beneficial – therefore he could reason that deceit (i.e. apparent complaisance) under the present political circumstances was expedient. By August 18, Cicero's term for his cunning pretence (σκολιαῖς ἀπάταις) appears to have become habitual with him (*Att.* 13.41.1). On the 23rd Cicero indicates that he now is carefully planning his meeting

⁶⁶ Cf. *Or.* 71 and 74 where Cicero states that the universal law, in oratory as in life (that would include political life), is to consider appropriateness. This seems to have become Cicero's definition of his political integrity in times of political uncertainty.

⁶⁷ Quintus junior, in debt at this time and at odds with his uncle Atticus, seems to have approached Cicero mainly for financial reasons. With this in mind, the two uncles Cicero and Atticus apparently agreed upon a strategy of cunning deceit to deal with the problem of young Quintus.

⁶⁸ Plato *Rep.* 2.365b also quotes Pindar: 'πότερον δίκᾳ τεῖχος ὕψιον ἢ σκολιαῖς ἀπάταις'.

⁶⁹ Plato *Rep.* 2.365c, quoting Archilochus *fr.* 86-9.

with Caesar and that he will follow Atticus' advice in seeking Caesar's approval (*Att.* 13.50.1, 4).⁷⁰

From this we can see that by the end of 45 Cicero has apparently adapted well to the political situation, yet seems to have embarked on a new line of attack against Caesar's regime. In his speech *Pro rege Deiotaro*⁷¹ delivered *in camera* before Caesar, Cicero complains of having to speak within the confines of a private house as opposed to speaking out in the openness of the forum in front of the Roman people:

(6) Hanc enim, C. Caesar, causam si in foro dicerem eodem audiente et disceptante te, quantam mihi alacritatem populi Romani concursus adferret! Quis enim civis ei regi non faveret cuius omnem aetatem in populi Romani bellis consumptam esse meminisset? Spectarem curiam, intuerer forum, caelum denique testarer ipsum. Sic, cum et deorum immortalium et populi Romani et senatus beneficia in regem Deiotarum recordarer, nullo modo mihi deesse posset oratio. (7) Quae quoniam angustiora parietes faciunt actioque maximae causae debilitatur loco, tuum est, Caesar, qui pro multis saepe dixisti, quid mihi nunc animi sit ad te ipsum referre, quo facilius cum aequitas tua tum audiendi diligentia minuat hanc perturbationem meam (*Deiot.* 6-7).

He draws a sharp contrast between the past and the present political situation. Apart from a possible reading of this passage in rhetorical terms as a 'predictable ingredient of a successful prooemium',⁷² to attain the goodwill and sympathy of Caesar, one may rather say that the nostalgic allusions to the past contain the same persuasive element evident in Cicero's Caesarian speeches of 46 and 45 BC. As such it becomes a persuasive ploy intended to compel Caesar towards reconsideration of what Cicero perceived as the oppressive political circumstances of the time. Such reconsideration could of course

⁷⁰ Oppius and Balbus conveyed Cicero's high opinion of the *Anti-Cato* to Caesar, and Cicero followed this up with a letter to Caesar. Cf. *Att.* 13.51.1. Cicero apparently, in all sincerity, did have a high opinion of the *Anti-Cato*: '*bene enim existimo de illis libris*' and could approve without flattery '*Itaque scripsi ἀκολακεύτως*'.

⁷¹ Deiotarus of Galatia, a client king, was prosecuted for allegedly plotting the assassination of Caesar in 47 BC. Deiotarus was not summoned to Rome to answer to the charges of his grandson Castor, the pretender to the throne; instead Cicero undertook his defence as a private hearing (*cognitio extra ordinem*) before Caesar, who acted as sole judge in his private home. That the dictator was not favourably disposed towards Deiotarus is suggested in the reluctance he showed to accept the Galatian king's plea for mercy. The outcome of the official trial is not known. Eventually, on the insistence of Brutus, Caesar pardoned Deiotarus and allowed him to retain his title with only the territorial loss of Armenia Minor. Cf. Cicero's accusation that Caesar has never (*numquam*) treated Deiotarus fairly (*Phil.* 2.95.3). Apparently no penalty was inflicted on Deiotarus and his confiscated territory was restored to him after Caesar's death.

⁷² Cf. Vasaly (1993:34).

(from Cicero's perspective) include the 'restoration of the republic' and this should materialise if Caesar were to be appropriately urged under the guise, for instance, of praise, a typical ploy of the less powerful when dealing with a strong opponent. This, then, amounts to Cicero's attempt at political manipulation of Caesar, a trend which was apparently already put in motion in 46, in his speech for Marcellus.⁷³

A prime example of what could be considered as Cicero's attempt at a veiled attack on Caesar is to be found in the *Pro rege Deiotaro* where Cicero implicitly criticises Caesar as a 'tyrant' by referring to a letter (now apparently lost) to king Deiotarus in which his lieutenant Blesamius reports the unpopularity of Caesar at Rome.⁷⁴

(33) At quam acute conlecta crimina! 'Blesamius' inquit, – eius enim nomine, optimi viri nec tibi ignoti, male dicebat tibi – 'ad regem' inquit 'scribere solebat te in invidia esse, **tyrannum existimari**, statua inter reges posita animos hominum vehementer offensos, plaudi tibi non solere.' Nonne intellegis, Caesar, ex urbanis malevolorum sermunculis haec ab istis esse conlecta? Blesamius **tyrannum Caesarem scriberet**? Multorum enim capita civium viderat, multos iussu Caesaris vexatos, verberatos, necatos, multas adflictas et eversas domos, armatis militibus refertum forum! Quae semper in civili victoria sensimus, ea te victore non vidimus. (34) Solus, inquam, es, C. Caesar, cuius in victoria ceciderit nemo nisi armatus. Et quem nos liberi in summa populi Romani libertate nati non modo non **tyrannum** sed etiam **clementissimum** in victoria ducimus, is Blesamio qui vivit in regno **tyrannus videri potest**? Nam de statua quis queritur, una praesertim, cum tam multas videat? Valde enim invidendum est eius statuis cuius tropaeis non invidemus. Nam si locus adfert invidiam, nullus est ad statuam quidem rostris clarior. De plausu autem **quid respondeam**? qui nec desideratus umquam in te est et non numquam obstupefactis hominibus ipsa admiratione compressus est et **fortasse** eo praetermissus quia nihil volgare te dignum **videri potest**.

⁷³ Dyer (1990) has cogently shown that the degree of ambiguity to be found hidden in Cicero's hyperbolic praise of Caesar is enough to class the *Pro Marcello*, not only as a straightforward *gratiarum actio*, but also as a political *suasoria*. In this speech Cicero tries to arouse *indignatio* amongst the senatorial order, by attaching to Caesar a kingly aura to stress the idea of a lost republic, and so exposes Caesar's own delusional perception of near divinity (*Marc.* 9.27, 28). Senatorial indignation is then expected to be replaced by a feeling of hatred towards a despot who does not have, as in the case of the 'good king', the allegiance of the people. Eventually such a despotic ruler lays himself open to the danger of assassination. The message that Cicero seems to convey to Caesar is that if he persists with his despotic rule, he is bound to become the victim of tyrannicides.

⁷⁴ Blesamius was one of three envoys sent on two occasions by Deiotarus to Caesar to negotiate the restoration of certain territories that the king had been deprived of by Caesar in 47 as a penalty for his earlier support of Pompeius at Pharsalus.

According to Castor (so Cicero) Blesamius allegedly reported that Caesar was regarded as a tyrant among the Roman people who showed their disenchantment with him by withholding their applause at his public appearances. Caesar had even allowed his statue to be placed on the Capitol among those of the kings of Rome.⁷⁵ Such a picture of a Caesar in regal robes might, five hundred years earlier, have been to the taste of pre-republican Romans, but now, having by this time lost even its sacrosanct meaning as the pontifical inhabitant of the Regia, the term *rex* symbolised oppression and discontent only, even aversion - typical of the Roman literary tradition of the 'bad king'. Cicero's constant use of the term *rex* as the title for Deiotarus, a title which he stresses was approved by the senate and the people, becomes something of a paradox. Deiotarus is depicted as the 'good ruler', who finds himself at the mercy of a ruler allegedly accused of behaving in the manner of a tyrant. This 'inconceivable' (*nonne intellegis*) and 'blasphemous' notion ascribed to Blesamius⁷⁶ is brought into the open by Cicero in his defence when he repeats and enumerates the alleged report of criticism that was used by the prosecution as an accusation against Caesar. The significance of the accusation lies in the use of the Latin term *tyrannus* which leaves no room for doubt - a despot, an oppressive ruler is indicated, the implication being that even a non-Roman, living under what Romans traditionally regard as *regnum*, is able to distinguish a despot.

Again Cicero creates tension between the past and the political circumstances of the day. Caesar is depicted in laudatory terms, but it becomes clear that this picture is only an

⁷⁵ Cf. Suet. *Iul.* 76. In the same year, May 45, another statue of Caesar inscribed as ἡμίθεος (demigod) was erected in the temple of Quirinus. Whether Caesar intended the placing of his statue solely as a dedication to Quirinus for his victory at Munda, or as recognition of acceptance of his 'divine heritage' as descendant of Venus and Iulus, who became king of Alba Longa, is open to speculation. Divine honours were decreed to him in 45 by the senate and the people (Suet. *Iul.* 76). This reaction to Caesar's power was probably both in recognition of the unprecedented nature of his power in the Roman world, and as an indication of loyalty to his rule. Some, however, took offence at such ostentatious display of 'greatness' which could mark the advent of true ruler cult at Rome. Cicero reveals his distaste (*acerba pompa*) for the *pompa circensis* where the image of Caesar was carried on display along with the image of Victory (*Att.* 13.44.1), and he grudgingly grants Caesar, in Cicero's view a mere mortal 'camp-follower' of Quirinus (*Quirini contubernalem* 13.28.3), the doubtful honour of not only sharing the god's tent, but also his temple: '*eum* [Caesarem] σύνναον *Quirino malo quam Saluti*' (*Att.* 12.45.2). Cicero probably found it more fitting to associate the 'war-lord' Caesar with the originally Sabine divinity, instead of the Roman personification of a quality, Salus, both 'health' and 'salvation' whose attributes, in 45, must have seemed, in Cicero's view, quite alien to the dictator. Cf. the interpretation of Gelzer (1969:103), who sees a link between the association of Quirinus as representing the deified Romulus, and Cicero's possible allusion to Caesar as sharing a similar fate to that of Romulus, who, according to one story, was torn apart by angry senators because he had become a tyrant.

⁷⁶ It is not unlikely that Cicero is suggesting wordplay on a subconscious level, i.e. Blesamius' violation of Caesar's 'divinity'.

illusion. Although Cicero refutes the grievances directed against Caesar, his efforts to explain away the alleged accusations against Caesar are, perhaps not unintentionally, not very convincing. To simply pass off these accusations as malicious gossip cannot reason away the reality of discontent evident among Caesar's subjects.⁷⁷ Under Caesar's rule Roman citizens are described as '*free, the freest of the free*' - possibly indicating that a despot's 'permission to be free' is very likely a most subtle form of slavery. Such *free* citizens have therefore no reason to find in the person of Caesar signs of tyrannical behaviour *whatsoever*. They are depicted as seeing their 'oppressor' as the *most merciful* of victorious commanders and therefore it is *hardly likely* that someone like Blesamius, who lives under the tyranny of Deiotarus, can perceive Caesar as a tyrant.

The verbal play between *tyrannum* and *clementissimum* (34), together with the ambiguity inherent in *existimari*, *scriberet*, *videri potest* appear to evoke the antithesis between the ideal ruler as benefactor and the oppressive tyrant. The significance that Cicero seems to convey to Caesar, is that *some* people *could* view him as the opposite of the beneficial ruler, in fact, as a tyrant who suppresses the *libertas* of Roman citizens,⁷⁸ who do not altogether trust the *clementia Caesaris*.⁷⁹ Therefore, Cicero seems to suggest that, although Caesar's position may appear omnipotent, the nature of his power is not perceived by all as constructive of a mutually beneficial relationship between himself as ruler and his subjects, who could pretend to reciprocate of their own volition. Praise of Caesar for retaliation against only those who were armed stresses Caesar's power to retaliate rather than his kindness to unarmed civilians.

Though Cicero refrains from calling Caesar *rex*, he frequently refers to Caesar in regal terms in his correspondence from July 45 onwards, a clear indication of his deep resentment of Caesar's rule.⁸⁰ His philosophical writings of this period also contain veiled criticism of Caesar's political conduct, criticism which spilled out in both anger and relief after Caesar's assassination. In *De officiis* 3.83, for instance, we find examples of the most virulent attacks on the morality of the deceased Caesar. One must keep in mind that after Caesar's assassination the immediate political circumstances at Rome did not

⁷⁷ In a letter to Dolabella, Cicero himself, later in December 45, calls his defence for Deiotarus weak and unimpressive (*Fam.* 9.12).

⁷⁸ Cf. the view, for instance, of Brutus in 43 (*Ad Brut.* 1.16).

⁷⁹ *Fam.* 11.28.2, *Att.* 10.4.8.

⁸⁰ *Att.* 13.37.2, *Fam.* 6.19.2, 11.27.8.

change for the better and Cicero was trying to warn against the tendency of other ambitious men like Antonius who also strove for tyrannical powers, as another civil war was looming on the horizon. The conflict of values between the former and the new political cultures (that had largely become personalised, in Cicero's perception, as an ideological conflict between himself and Caesar) spilled over into a next stage, where we find Cicero increasingly discarding his *persona* of philosophical detachment, and actively presenting himself as a moralist with a political agenda. To this next phase of Cicero's political activities, with our hindsight view of the inevitability of its carrying the seeds of its own destruction, we shall now turn.

10. And so the end draws near: ‘*naufragia ex terra intueri*’¹

10.1 Cicero’s philosophical works: the *negotium* of a statesman

For Cicero, the first months of 44 BC, which he had spent in political retirement during Caesar’s dictatorship, signalled the slow revival of his intention and desire to play a more active political role in the possible restoration of the republican form of government. This period also saw the completion of a series of Cicero’s philosophical works which stand apart from the works written in the months following the event of Caesar’s assassination. For Cicero, Caesar’s murder constituted both a turning point in his earlier exclusion from politics and a return to public life. This is reflected in his literary output of the time. The period immediately subsequent to Caesar’s death was uncertain. Circumstances were strongly reminiscent of the turbulent period of 49 BC before Caesar took control.

The event of Caesar’s assassination in 44 BC radically altered the political stage at Rome. Political circumstances remained unpredictable and dangerous. Still, with the dictator removed from the political scene, Cicero could indulge himself in the illusion that the restoration of a free republic was once more conceivable. The more open criticism to be found throughout Cicero’s philosophical writings of the period immediately following the assassination of Caesar suggests that Cicero felt himself free to discard his former *modus operandi* of offering none but veiled criticism. Free to venture on a more open road of political criticism, Cicero could assume the role of philosophical advisor to the powers that were in flux at the time, thereby attempting to serve the interests of his country.

¹ The quotation in the chapter heading is taken from *Att.* 2.7.4 written in April 59. Cicero often exploits nautical imagery, when he alludes to political disaster (especially the collapse of the *res publica*) in terms of shipwreck. Cf. Fantham (1972:22-26). In 59, after having been forced to leave the ship of state, the helm taken over by the triumvirs, Cicero expresses his desire to watch from the shore what he perceives to be the sinking of the *res publica*. This wish is followed by a quotation from the *Tympanistae*, a lost play of Sophocles : ‘*cupio, ut ait tuus amicus Sophocles,*

‘*κἄν ὑπὸ στέγῃ*

πυκνῆς ἀκούειν ψακάδος εὐδούσῃ φρενί.’ (Soph. *fr.* 636, Nauck *fr.* 579).

Here Cicero distances himself from the political shipwreck in the making. He views himself as an observer, sheltered on the shore, and with a calm mind listening to the pouring political storm. The quotation from Sophocles in 59 conveyed Cicero’s pessimistic outlook relating to the Roman political scene (cf. for instance, *Att.* 2.16.2 for his description of Pompeius, Chapter Nine section one above). It does so again in 44 when Cicero increasingly alludes to himself as a ‘prophet’ (*Att.* 15.11.3, 16.6.2, see below Chapter Ten section two).

That this is his intention he explicitly claims in the preface of *De amicitia*; by writing a discourse on friendship he intends the reading public to benefit from it (*Amic.* 4.4).² *De amicitia* should therefore not be regarded as a purely theoretical work, and its practical ramifications should be noted. In this dialogue Cicero seems to suggest a continuation of the duty both to serve and save the state from political deterioration,³ by means of the theorising assumed at the time when he found himself deprived of the opportunity to play an active political role.

Written against similar backgrounds, that both adumbrated civil war (respectively the turbulent politics of the late fifties and those of the early forties), the earlier *De republica* and *De amicitia* as *philosophical dialogues* convey a similar aim. Both are situated in the same dramatic setting, namely the turbulent period of 129 BC when Rome experienced a political crisis, characterised by the conservative attempt (led by Scipio) to halt the violent social upheaval brought on by the agrarian reforms under the Gracchi. Cicero's choice of dramatic date could very well indicate an 'evocation of an ideal past';⁴ however, emphasis on the dramatic date as a signpost for revolution could also indicate a significant break with the ideal but distant past of that time, which commenced with the unexpected death of Scipio and the subsequent civil strife that followed.⁵

In the scene-setting narrative of *De amicitia* Cicero transfers the listener back in time to the days of his political apprenticeship when he found himself under the guidance of his first tutor, Scaevola the Augur. Cicero recalls an incident where he had listened to a conversation between Scaevola and a few of his friends. Cicero remembers how Scaevola started the conversation on friendship by commenting on the existing enmity between the erstwhile friends Publius Sulpicius (*trib. pleb.* 88 BC) and the consul Quintus Pompeius. The topic of the breaking off of friendship is deployed as springboard from where Scaevola sends his audience (as does Cicero) on a voyage into the past of his own youth. What next follows is Cicero's purportedly memorised version of Scaevola's retelling of a

² *'Itaque feci non invitus, ut prodessem multis rogatu tuo'*. This claim of Cicero's, that he aims to serve his country with his writing, is also stated in *Div.* 2.1.

³ Cf. Chapter Six section two above.

⁴ Cf. Habinek (1990:167) opposed by Leach (1993:3).

⁵ Cicero (*Rep.* 6.12 and *Amic.* 3.12) seems to refer to rumours of foul play suggestive of the politically motivated murder of Scipio by the supporters of the Gracchi.

conversation on the topic of friendship that took place between Gaius Laelius (the Wise), Gaius Fannius and Scaevola himself.

From this scene-setting narrative in the introductory passages of *De amicitia* then, it can be deduced that Cicero discerns parallels conforming to a pattern of hatred and alienation between tribunes of the people and consuls.⁶ Such a pattern would be consistent with the political turmoil pertaining to both the dramatic date of 129 BC (shortly after the death of Scipio Aemilianus) and the contemporary political upheaval of 44 BC. In contrast to *De republica* (where presentation of the past mainly functioned as an exemplary ideal to be emulated), the subject matter of *De amicitia*, which Cicero presents as the ideal of friendship, is contemporary and much more politically relevant.⁷

Within the framework of the philosophical ideal of friendship, Cicero's references to the historical *exempla* he cites become significantly more meaningful than the mere moralistic condemnation often ascribed to Cicero as a disillusioned politician. In writing *De amicitia* Cicero perceived himself to be again practicing the *negotium* of the statesman. Through his evaluation of past and present events, he not only attempts to advance the interest of the state, but also tries to influence the contemporary political milieu in the hope that his contemporaries might heed this warning against the threat of another civil war.⁸

The relevant *political* themes framed within this *philosophical* dialogue correspond with the contents of Cicero's letters during his political 'retirement'. Cicero is now less hesitant than before to discuss the dangers of the political arena that afflicted his idealised republic and which he thought could in the long run lead to its demise.

The theme of the breaking off of friendship for political reasons, touched upon in the correspondence, is picked up again and forms the starting point of what may be

⁶ Confrontation and political violence between the people and the senate had not been unfamiliar ever since the prominence of the Scipios. Cf. Chapter Five above.

⁷ Cicero seems to suggest that Atticus (to whom the dialogue was dedicated) shared similar sentiments on the subject of friendship as expressed by the main speaker in the dialogue, Gaius Laelius the Wise: '*quam legens te ipse cognoscas*' (*Amic.* 5.10).

⁸ It seems that by July 44 Cicero has returned to public life and active politics. Cf. Powell's remarks (1990:6) on some parallels that are evident between *De amicitia* 11-14 and the *First Philippic* (composed in September 44). For the date of *De amicitia* as summer 44 BC, see Cicero *Div.* 2 and *Off.* 2.31 (*terminus ante quem*), Zetzel (1972:178), Leach (1993).

considered as Cicero's renewed effort to delay a recurrent process of political deterioration. As indicated in his correspondence, Cicero insists that rivalry jeopardises friendship in politics.⁹

Historical *exempla* that figured in the earlier *De republica* and in the correspondence are presented as possible parallels for contemporary political circumstances in *De amicitia*. In *De amicitia*, for instance, Cicero depicts Coriolanus (36.3,4, 42.13), Spurius Cassius and Maelius (28.7, 36.5), Themistocles (42.9) and Tiberius Gracchus (41) as dangerous agents threatening the well-being of the state.¹⁰ These historical *exempla* had already occurred in the letters of 49, where Cicero deployed some of them as precedents for men who resorted to arms against the state. In 49, for instance, when Cicero realised that Pompeius had left Rome and deserted Italy, he repeatedly used Themistocles as historical *exemplum* to portray the conduct of Pompeius. During this year Cicero appears to have discarded the former more positive portrayal of Themistocles (with whom he himself probably identified during the years of his exile)¹¹ which he employed during the fifties.¹² From January 49 onwards Cicero's correspondence with Atticus reveals a treacherous 'Themistoclean' Pompeius fleeing his country.¹³ A similar parallel may be deduced in *De officiis* where Cicero appears to claim that a disgraceful act (i.e. perhaps even deserting one's country) is never expedient (*Off.* 3.49.1, 10). The seemingly straightforward criticism of Pompeius on the run seems to indicate that Cicero was already projecting (whether through reasoning or intuition or both) the outcome of the war. Cicero could also reason that Pompeius, like Themistocles before him, had acted in an unstatesmanlike manner, even disgracefully, by taking the 'wrong' course of action. Cicero's use of Themistocles as historical precedent for Pompeius could be an indication that Cicero subconsciously believed that Pompeius was predisposed to defeat, and that he would inevitably be outwitted by a more calculating opponent.¹⁴

⁹ Cf. *Att.* 10.7.1, and Chapter Nine section one above.

¹⁰ For Themistocles as *exemplum* cf. *Off.* 1.108; the removal of T. Gracchus by P. Nasica, though through a violent deed, is viewed in *Off.* 1.76 as a political measure taken in the interest of the state.

¹¹ *Fam.* 5.12.5.9 and 5.12.7.15.

¹² *Rep.* 1.5.5.

¹³ *Att.* 7.11.3.5 (January), 9.10.3.3 (March), 10.8.4.3, 10.8.7.6 (May).

¹⁴ Cicero's criticism of Pompeius in *Tusc.* 1.12.10 is tempered and more neutral than in the correspondence, but less so in *Off.* 1.76.9, 1.78.4, 2.45.13, 2.57.14, 2.60.7.

Caesar, on the other hand, is often paralleled with the tainted image of Alexander the Great¹⁵ as a plunderer,¹⁶ and a slayer of his own friends.¹⁷ The image of Caesar as invincible conqueror apparently manifested itself in Cicero's view. In 49 (*Att.* 7.11.1) he, for instance, alludes to Caesar as a 'Hannibal' and in *Fam.* 10.13.2 as an 'Odysseus' to whom Cicero, in this instance, assigns the epithet of *πολιπόρθιον* 'sacker of cities'. Mythical allusions to Odysseus¹⁸ and the underworld had featured as denominators for Caesar and his followers in the correspondence between Atticus and Cicero, during the period of civil war.¹⁹ One could extend this metaphor by presuming that Caesar, from 49 onwards, became in Cicero's mind the embodiment of a 'Charon', who may now be seen as steering the ship of state, the 'dying *res publica*', to its final abode – the halls of Hades.

To this increasingly dark picture of a doomed *res publica* and its incumbent 'prophet', undertaking the inspection of the *viscera* that were still attached to the body politic,²⁰ we now turn.

¹⁵ *Inv.* 1.93.

¹⁶ *Off.* 1.43, 2.83, 3.36.

¹⁷ Alexander allegedly killed Cleitus and Callisthenes (*Tusc.* 3.21, 4.79). Likewise Caesar could be seen as instrumental in the deaths of his 'son' Pompeius, the fatherland, and those fellow countrymen who became victims of the civil war.

¹⁸ Cf. *Att.* 9.7.3, *Fam.* 13.15.1. Cicero often alludes to himself in Homeric terms, perhaps as an 'Iliadic' hero, armed with the weaponry of Minerva, whom he seems to have considered as his special patroness (*Dom.* 57.144). He seems to identify with specific aspects of Odysseus (as, for instance, his intelligence and experience when facing a dangerous world) that also appealed to Polybius (9.16.1, 12.27.10).

¹⁹ Cicero informs us that the Greek word *νέκυια* (underworld) was Atticus' nickname for the followers of Caesar '*quam illam νέκυϊαν, ut tu appellas*' (*Att.* 9.11.2). Cf. *Att.* 9.9.4 Cicero: *τότε μοι χάνοι εὐρεῖα χθών* 'then may the earth gape wide for me' in fearful anticipation that Caesar might call on his services. *Att.* 9.10.7 *νέκυϊαν*, *Att.* 9.18.2.

²⁰ Cf. Cristofani (1978:97) for the difference between the Etruscan and Roman practice of *haruspicina*. Whereas The Etruscan *haruspex* first removes the *exta* from the victim, the Roman method is to examine entrails still attached to the body. See Introduction 1.2 above.

10.2 Cicero: ‘προθεσπίζω *igitur, coniectura prospiciens*’²¹

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Cicero’s confidence in his mantic powers finally blossomed. Not that his own estimate thereof ever appears anything less than moderate, as his pessimistic remarks to Atticus in February 49 indicate: προθεσπίζω *igitur, noster Attice, non hariolans, ut illa cui nemo credidit,*²² *sed coniectura prospiciens: ‘iamque mari magno . . .’; non multo, inquam, secus possum vaticinari; tanta malorum impendet Ἰλιάς* (8.11.3).²³ Cicero, early in 49, displayed little doubt about his own prognostic capability. He clearly distinguishes himself as a prophet who can predict (προθεσπίζω, *possum vaticinari*), not by divine inspiration (*non hariolans*), but by rational forecast (*sed prospiciens*).²⁴

Cicero’s correspondence during the period immediately following Caesar’s death clearly reflects his view that the dictator’s legacy of tyranny was beckoning others, Antonius and Octavius, for instance, to imitate him. This disturbing animadversion could suggest that history was repeating itself. It consistently haunted Cicero until September 44 when he, after a series of hostile speeches against Antonius, withdrew from Rome and began composing *De amicitia* and *De officiis*. Both works constitute the culmination of Cicero’s observation of the political scene, reflecting the type of political theorising also evident in his correspondence with Atticus during 44, where he increasingly appears to hark back to his earlier ‘statesmanlike’ behaviour in his comments on political matters. Many factors probably contributed to Cicero’s decision to write *De amicitia* and *De officiis*, but in essence Cicero, through his writings, is now re-creating a spotlight for himself on the Roman political stage.

²¹ Att. 8.11.3.

²² Cassandra, in spite of her ability to prophesy accurately, was unfortunately condemned never to be believed (Apollod. 3.12.5) She is depicted as frenzied prophetess in ancient literature especially in the works of Euripides: *Hecuba* 120, 675, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 751, *Trojan women* 35, 165, 305. In the *Alexander* of Ennius she seemingly shares a reputation similar to that of the frenzied prophets (*vates furenti*) depicted in Cicero’s *Cons.* 28.

²³ Cf. Att. 9.10 (March 49) when Cicero agonised over Pompeius’ flight from Rome: ‘*ita dies et noctes tamquam avis illa mare prospecto, evolare cupio ... quid feci non consideratissimi? ... sed genus belli crudelissimi et maximi, quod nondum vident homines quale futurum sit, perhorruī*’. See note 49 below.

²⁴ See above Introduction 1.2 for Cicero’s view of a prophet who predicts rationally.

That Cicero's jubilation at the removal of Caesar was short-lived and eventually displaced by the certain acknowledgement of the existence of an ever-increasing rift between pro- and anti-Caesarians (whom Cicero still prefers to call the '*boni* ') becomes evident in a letter to Atticus written during his stay-over as a guest of his friend C. Matius en route to Campania, following the series of riots in Rome after the funeral of Caesar. Cicero has clearly misjudged the depth of Caesar's former support. Not all thought of him as a tyrant. This became evident to him from Matius' devastated reaction at Caesar's death. Cicero quotes this strong supporter and close friend of Caesar's, a former 'advocate of peace' (*Att.* 9.11)²⁵ who has, so Cicero thinks, turned into a 'hater of peace' (*Att.* 14.2.3). He recounts Matius' perceptions of the utter state of ruin (*perisse omnia* 14.1.1) that befell Rome with Caesar's assassination. This letter (written on 7 April 44) points to a widening alienation between pro- and anti-Caesarians from early April onwards, and the devastation experienced by some Caesarian supporters who, like Matius, had seen the former dictator as the only solution to Rome's political problems: '*etenim si ille tali ingenio exitum non reperiebat, quis nunc reperiet?*'²⁶ To Cicero some of them seem intent on seeking conflict with the opposers of the Caesarian regime, whilst others, 'more wise', were careful not to offend the '*boni*'. As in 49, Cicero identifies two very hostile groups: the Caesarian side, here represented in the person of a conflict-seeking Matius who does not desire peace,²⁷ and the republican side, epitomised in the person of Brutus, who likewise displays disturbing signs of hostility (*Att.* 14.5.1). This apparently leads Cicero to share Matius' forebodings of doom: '*quod haud scio an ita sit*' (14.1.1). However, his reluctance to accept these forebodings as certainties becomes evident when he asks Atticus for his opinion. For Cicero, amidst the serious talk of hostilities, Atticus' letters seem to exhibit not only a more pacifistic tone, but also a sense of calm reasoning: '*tranquillae tuae quidem litterae*' (14.3.1).

²⁵ Cicero appears unwilling to accommodate Matius' grief over Caesar's death, as well as his support of Antonius and Octavius, and shows reluctance to reconcile both this normal attitude of Matius with his former criticism of Caesar's actions during the civil war and his claims of being supportive of the established order of the '*boni*': *nullam communionem cum improbis* (*Fam.* 11.28.5). It seems not to strike Cicero that, to a certain extent, Matius' remark on his friendship with Caesar '*neque enim Caesarem in dissensione civili sum secutus, sed amicum, quamquam re offendebar, tamen non deserui ...*' (*Fam.* 11.28.2) closely resembles his own attitude during the civil war when he chose to follow Pompeius.

²⁶ Matius' choice of a possible candidate seems to have fallen on Octavius, whom he apparently held to be a promising young man: '*optimae spei adulescenti*' (*Fam.* 11.28.6).

²⁷ '*φαλάκρωμα inimicissimum oti, id est Bruti*' (*Att.* 14.2.3). This criticism is denied by Matius: '*neque bellum umquam civile aut etiam causam dissensionis probavi, quam etiam nascentem exstingui summe ... studui*' (*Fam.* 11.28.2).

By April 10, Cicero remarks that he finds the political situation very painful (*doleo*) and states that the unprecedented ‘restoration of freedom’, without the recovery of a free constitution, has serious implications for the future (*Att.* 14.4.1). At this stage Cicero still seems reluctant to elaborate on these ‘serious implications’. His next letter to Atticus (on the following day) shows growing unease and his displeasure with his own inactive political role. He remarks on his inability to remedy the present political situation (*cui certe si possem mederi, deesse non deberem*) and his unabated fear of danger from the deceased ‘tyrant’s obsequious followers’ ‘*tyranni satellites*’ (14.5.2). His joy over Caesar’s removal from the political scene (14.6.1) is overshadowed by his dismay with the current apathy displayed by the ‘*boni*’. This leads him to recognise that in effect the Caesarians still tyrannise the so-called victors (14.6.2). This observation becomes a refrain in the letters written during April to May.²⁸

During these months Cicero shows growing determination in formulating what may be called his political agenda for the future. Cicero the ‘former statesman’ is slowly re-emerging from the shadows of his long enforced political inactivity. One cannot but read a statesmanlike purpose when Cicero promises Atticus a political analysis of contemporary events later on: ‘*plura et πολιτικώτερα postea*’ (14.6.2).²⁹ By April 17 Cicero clearly states that although the former tyrant is dead, the tyranny lives on (*Att.* 14.9.2). For Cicero it is evident that Caesar in his absence is as omnipresent as ever and that the legacy of his regime is very much alive (14.10.1). More disturbing news comes from Atticus who thinks that Octavius will become a great rival of Antonius’ when he accepts his inheritance, as was expected (14.10.3). By April 21 Cicero is ready to agree with Atticus on the obvious intemperance (ἀκολασίαν) displayed by the Caesarians and he now expects the situation to worsen. This is evident in his letter of the next day, when he acknowledges the danger posed by Antonius, whom he views as the one loose end that needs tidying up: “Ὁ πράξεως καλῆς μὲν, ἀτελούς δε.”³⁰ Antonius’ behaviour spells only trouble, according to Cicero, and he accuses him of both taking bribes, to the

²⁸ *Att.* 14.9.2, 14.10.1, 14.11.1, 14.14.2.

²⁹ Cf. Shackleton Bailey’s commentary (vol. 6 p. 218) who translates for a more statesmanlike reading of *πολιτικώτερα*, as ‘political purpose’.

³⁰ ‘What then does it matter when a good deed was done, but too many loose ends were left unfinished?’ (*Att.* 14.12.1).

detriment of the state treasury, and of the posting of laws allegedly carried by Caesar.³¹ The crimes of the past seem all too familiar. Cicero also shows increasing distrust of Octavius: his conduct is contrary to what Cicero considers to be typical of a *bonus civis* and he is surrounded by those who threaten and oppose the ‘liberators’. In short, Cicero appears to recognise in Octavius certain tell-tale signs of the new dispensation, not very different from that enforced by Caesar and his followers in the recent past. Once again Cicero is obliged to remark that the euphoria after Caesar’s death was short-lived, and that the ‘old order’ is once more to be overthrown, with the ‘boni’, as the losers, bowing out in defeat ‘*nos, nisi me fallit, iacebimus*’ (14.14.2).

By the end of April Cicero predicts the possible renewal of civil war (*si est bellum civile futurum*), positing it as a certainty (*quod certe erit ... certo scio*).³² Here Cicero presents his prediction with all the flair of a ‘Caelius’ in a combination of political instinct and inductive reasoning. Although he has again to acknowledge (as he did in 49) that ‘his’ republic is defunct (*nullam rem publicam*), he appears not to want to accept this.³³ Such ambivalence probably proved the incentive for the resurgent political intention he displays in the following letters, in which he minutely discusses his political observations with Atticus. It is clear to him that the tyranny has outlived the tyrant: ‘*sublato enim tyranno tyrannicida manere video*’ (*Att.* 14.14.2). Not much, according to Cicero, has changed since the period of 49 when freedom was lost, and he does not foresee that the senate will ever regain its former freedom to pass decrees at will. That ideal, Cicero remarks, was not the case on March 17 (14.14.2), and neither will it be the case in the future: ‘*libertatem populo Romano non dederunt* (3), *nec liberi sumus*’ (5).

The letters written during April display an increasing use of verbs that denote certainty. As opposed to the correspondence of 49, we now see Cicero stating with confidence his view of probable future political development. The hesitant tone that characterised his observations during 50 and 49, as expressed in the letters, is now replaced with a tone of confidence in his own powers of perspicacity. In sum, Cicero now shows preference for verbs that carry the sense of conviction (*scio, video*) as opposed to the hesitancy inherent

³¹ Cf. *Att.* 14.13.6.

³² *Att.* 14.13.2.

³³ *Att.* 14.13.5.

in, for instance, *puto*, *spero* and *videtur*.³⁴ Whereas the correspondence of 50 and 49 has shown both Atticus and Caelius expressing their certainty of prediction³⁵ in contrast with the deliberation and indecision on Cicero's part (*Att.* 7.11, 8.3, 9.4),³⁶ the correspondence of 44 strongly suggests that Cicero at this time claims that he knows what is going to happen.³⁷

The indication is that Cicero had a boost of confidence in his own powers of observation, probably as early as 46.³⁸ During October 46, in a letter to A. Caecina (who had prophesied Cicero's speedy return from exile), Cicero elaborates on the nature of his prognostic powers: '*ne nos quidem nostra divinatio fallat, quam cum sapientissimorum virorum moni[men]tis atque praeceptis plurimoque, ut tu scis, doctrinae studio tum magno etiam usu tractandae rei publicae magnaue nostrorum temporum varietate consecuti sumus*' (*Fam.* 6.6.3),³⁹ and with hindsight he goes on to give examples of his own predictions during the civil war (4-6). Cicero with hindsight was often prone to overstate his past prognostic abilities. In this letter he claims to have recognised the danger of Caesar's increasing power, but that his advice to Pompeius not to ally himself with Caesar was not heeded, and he that foresaw that the alliance of powerful individuals

³⁴ Cicero himself seems to distinguish between *video* and *spero* in the sense that the former indicates a positive, certain attitude, whereas the latter points to uncertainty and unease: Atticus: '*tibi, ut video et spero, nulla ad decedendum erit mora*'; Cicero: '*mallem "ut video", nihil opus fuit "ut spero"*' (*Att.* 5.21.3). Cf. Cicero's letter to Cato (*Fam.* 15.6.2) '*ut spero, te propediem videbo, atque utinam re publica meliore quam timeo*'.

³⁵ Cicero of Atticus: '*ut et tu ostendis et ego video, summa inter eos contentio*' (October 50, *Att.* 7.1.3), '*Uni tuae disertissimae epistulae non rescripsi, in qua est de periculis rei publicae. quid rescriberem? valde eram perturbatus*'. Cicero: '*sic enim sentio, maximo in periculo rem esse*' (December 50 *Att.* 7.3.5), and in March 49 of Atticus: '*nec sine causa ... bellum nefarium times*' (*Att.* 9.9.4). Caelius uses a very assertive *video* in answer to Cicero's *puto*: Caelius: '*video magnas impendere discordias*', Cicero: '*quid putem futurum*' (*Fam.* 8.14.4).

³⁶ October 50: '*videre enim mihi videor tantam dimicationem*' (*Att.* 7.1.2). January 49: '*mihi enim tenebrae sunt*' (*Att.* 7.11.1), '*ego enim ἀπορώ*' (7.11.3), '*haec tu mihi explica qualia sint*' (7.11.4), '*quid futurum sit non video*' (7.13.2). February 49: '*Quod me magno ... videor*' (8.11.1), March 49: '*quae autem impendere putarem scripseram ad te*' (8.13.2). In answer to Atticus' previous criticism of Cicero's vacillation: '*totiensne igitur sententiam mutas?*' (March 2, 49 *Att.* 8.14.2) Cicero replies on March 17: '*faciamus igitur ut censes, colligamusque nos. σοφιστεῦν enim simul ut rus decurro atque in decursu θέσεις meas commentari non desino; sed sunt quaedam earum perdifficiles ad iudicandum*' (*Att.* 9.9.1).

³⁷ '*quae parari video*' (*Att.* 14.18.4), '*non est dubium*' (14.21.3), '*minime obscurum est*' (14.22.1), '*perspexi plane*' (14.22.1).

³⁸ Cf. Cicero's letter to M. Marius during mid April 46: '*quae acciderunt omnia dixi futura*' (*Fam.* 7.3.3).

³⁹ 'I shall not be deceived by my prophetic skill, for, as you know, I acquired it not only from the admonitions and precepts of men of wisdom, but also from diligent study, my experience as a statesman, and the remarkable vicissitudes of my career'.

would result in the disintegration of the senatorial order, eventually facilitating the outbreak of civil war (6.6.4-5). Having established his credentials as ‘accurate predictor of future events’ on the basis of his past predictions, Cicero then delivers what he explicitly terms his ‘*augurium*’ indicating Caecina’s imminent recall from exile with the utmost confidence, with no doubt whatsoever that the outcome would prove trustworthy (12).

In this letter Cicero likens himself to ‘Amphiaraus’, a prophet who, in the face of disaster, empowered with wisdom and foreknowledge, predicted the outcome of war:⁴⁰

itaque vel officio vel fama bonorum vel pudore victus ut in fabulis Amphiaraus sic ego
 ‘prudens et sciens
 ad pestem ante oculos positam’
 sum profectus. quo in bello nihil adversi accidit non praedicente me (*Fam.* 6.6.6).

Cicero also elaborates further on the nature of his prophetic ability and the reason why he should be entitled to respect as a seer: ‘*debebit habere fidem nostra praedictio*’ (7). In the first place Cicero clearly states that in his capacity as a seer he observes a different set of ‘signs’ from that found in traditional augury. This includes both the study of character (for instance that of rulers – in this case that of Caesar) and the general nature of political circumstances (8).⁴¹ Though the letter to Caecina is in general a letter of consolation, and for that reason Cicero perhaps deliberately somewhat overstates his capabilities, it is quite

⁴⁰ Even when Cicero uses Greek terms for prognostication it is in a political context. In 54 (*Fam.* 7.16.1) Cicero calls Trebatius a not over-zealous seer (φιλοθέωρον), and in 49 (*Att.* 9.10.5) Atticus’ thoughts on whether or not Pompeius would leave Italy is described as an oracle (χρησμός). Cf. Zetzel’s note (1999:xxxviii – xxxix) on the terminology of Cicero’s political theory in *De republica*. In this work, according to Zetzel, Cicero stresses the etymology of *prudens* from the verb *providere* as the ability ‘to foresee’. In *Off.* 1.153.10 Cicero distinguishes the statesman’s *prudencia* (which is equivalent to the Aristotelian virtue *phronesis* – practical knowledge), that is, the ability to understand political circumstances and to deal with them in advance, from *sapientia* (theoretical wisdom, the foremost of all virtues). This distinction is also made in *De amicitia*. In both these works political foresight and wisdom are used in a complementary way, and the former sometimes becomes a prerequisite for the latter. Marcus Cato, for instance, was called ‘wise’ not only for his many-sided expertise, but also for his ability on many occasions, both in the senate and the forum, to display his political foresight: ‘*Cato quia multarum rerum usum habebat et in senatu et in foro vel provisā prudenter vel acta constanter vel responsa acute ferebantur*’ (*Amic.* 6). For the association of political foresight with the duties of a worthy statesman see *Amic.* 40 where ‘Laelius’ states that it is the duty of men of his stature to foresee the future of the republic: ‘*Etenim eo loco, Fanni et Scaevola, locati sumus, ut nos longe prospicere oporteat futuros casus rei publicae*’. Cf. *Amic.* 2.74.4, 2.84.5.

⁴¹ ‘*notantur autem mihi ad divinandum signa duplici quadam via; quarum alteram duco e Caesare ipso, alteram e temporum civilium natura atque ratione*’.

clear that Cicero's self-esteem as a political analyst, even during the dictator-years, is strengthening. This is indicated in the closing paragraphs where he remarks optimistically 'ut spero', then more confidently 'vel potius ut perspicio', and lastly with certainty 'videbimus' that Caecina will be allowed to return to Rome.

On May 3, 44 Cicero mentions his preoccupation with the writing of his ἀνέκδοτον, which apparently includes certain accusations against the Caesarian party (*illas nefarias partis*).⁴² This could be seen as part of his new political purpose in opposing the new dangers that threaten any possible return of his ideal republic. By May 11 Atticus shows concern for the new direction that Cicero has embarked upon. He expresses serious doubts about Cicero's view that the salvation of Rome is to be found in the ability and person of Brutus and advises Cicero to steer clear of politics (*Att.* 14.20.3). Cicero angrily objects to the idea: 'Epicuri mentionem facis et audes dicere μὴ πολιτεύεσθαι?' (5). By now Cicero appears increasingly certain that a renewal of civil war is in the making. This he deduces from observing Antonius' general conduct - his touring of the provinces visiting veterans, instructing them to arm themselves - 'mihi autem non est dubium quin res spectet ad castra' (*Att.* 14.21.1). Cicero views Antonius as the heir to Caesar's tyranny - 'quis enim hoc non vidit, regni heredem relictum?' This heir should have been eliminated along with Caesar.⁴³

On May 14 Cicero indicates that he is about to investigate more carefully (perhaps 'nose out') the political indications of what the future may hold in store (*cupio enim ante quam Romam venio odorari diligentius quod futurum sit*). Now he truly is becoming the 'haruspex' solicitously inspecting the entrails of the corpse politic.⁴⁴ He appears quite undaunted in his conviction that his political conjectures are well-founded: 'vereor ne

⁴² *Att.* 14.17.6. This work has been identified with the ἀνέκδοτα that Cicero was proposing to write in 59 (*Att.* 2.6.2) at a stage when he felt his contribution to politics limited to nothing else but 'odisse improbos'. Rawson (1982b:121-24) identifies it with a work that was known in later antiquity as the *expositio consiliorum suorum*, a work that she places within the genre of historiography, probably as part of a larger, general history of the time.

⁴³ Cf. *Phil.* 2.34, *Att.* 14.22.2.

⁴⁴ From April 44 onwards Cicero does not hesitate to refer to the *res publica* as virtually non-existent: 'perisse omnia' (*Att.* 14.1.1), 'nullam rem publicam' (14.13.3), and by November he accepts that the 'wound' of the *res publica* (*Att.* 1.18.2) has become fatal: 'sed desperatis etiam Hippocrates vetat adhibere medicinam' (*Att.* 16.15.5). Cf. Chapter Eleven below for similar observations during 59, when Cicero could still jokingly refer to the 'empty husks' of the *res publica*: 'quin tu huc advolas et invisisti illius nostrae rei publicae germanae puta<mina>?' (*Att.* 4.19).

nihil a coniectura aberrem’, followed by a statement of perspicacity: ‘*perspexi enim plane*’ (*Att.* 14.22.1). He observes that the Caesarians openly display their intentions for the near future (*minime enim obscurum est quid isti moliantur*), that they fear the possibility of peace (*timent otium*), that they categorically postulate that the murder of the illustrious Caesar (*ὑπόθεσιν autem hanc habent eamque prae se ferunt clarissimum <virum> interfectum*) has catastrophic implications for the entire state (*totam rem publicam illius interitu perturbata*), and that Caesar’s clemency was his misfortune (*clementiam illi malo fuisse*). The Caesarian’s denigration of their leader’s clemency could threaten peace overtures, therefore Cicero holds it reasonable (*est εὐλογον*) to predict (*mihi autem venit in mentem*) war with reasonable certainty (*certe fore bellum*). This disturbing but calculated overall picture envisaging gathering war-clouds ‘*haec me species cogitatioque perturbat*’ (14.22.2) further strengthens in Cicero’s perception by the middle of May.

By the eighteenth of May Cicero’s suspicions about Octavius have deepened as he shows distrust of the fact that Octavius keeps company with former close friends of Caesar, Matius and Posthumus. By now Atticus has predicted an impending victory for the Caesarians: ‘*scribis parendum victoribus*’ (*Att.* 15.3.1). Also, according to Atticus (so Cicero), Antonius’ behaviour spells constitutional trouble if his plans (to have the senate transfer Brutus’ province to him) succeed. Cicero must have experienced a twinge of memory, or even a flashback, of the circumstances around Caesar’s consulship in 59, for surely it must have appeared to him as though history was repeating itself. Antonius, true to the form that Cicero has expected, got what he desired by means of a *lex* carried by the assembly and not the senate (*Att.* 15.4.1). On May 24 Cicero once more has to emphasise that the evil has not been uprooted: ‘*excisa enim est arbor, non evulsa. itaque quam fruticetur vides*’ (15.4.2). It is interesting to note that Cicero alludes to Caesar in terms of a tree. Here Cicero deploys the tree as a symbol of political strength.⁴⁵ He seems subconsciously to have felt that the roots of Caesar’s dispensation stretched back too deeply into Roman past precedents to be eradicated.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ In his poem *Marius* the oak tree symbolises Gaius Marius as an exemplary statesman. Cf. Lucan’s use of the oak as metaphor for Pompeius *BC* 1.136.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Tusc.* 4.24.

By June 7, after meeting with Brutus and Cassius, Cicero, wholly disheartened, ponders over the flotsam of his former hope of a revived republic. He confesses that what he had perceived as the ship of government was breaking up (*prorsus dissolutum offendi navigium vel potius dissipatum*), and that its navigators are at their wits' end and display a total lack of planning, in short, of any chart for these troubled waters: '*nihil consilio, nihil ratione, nihil ordine*' (Att. 15.11.3).⁴⁷

No wonder Cicero ponders: ἡ δεῦρ' ὁδὸς σοι τί δύνανται νῦν, θεοπρόπε;⁴⁸ On June 7, in a thoroughly despondent mood Cicero resorts to his familiar theme song, once again expressing his wish to 'fly away'⁴⁹ from the present political situation: '*tamen nunc eo minus, evolare hinc idque quam primum, "ubi nec Pelopidarum facta neque famam audiam"*' (Att. 15.11.3).⁵⁰ By July 6 Cicero describes Brutus' attitude as that of 'helplessness' (ἀμηχανία)⁵¹ and on July 25 he again has to ask what, indeed, his own

⁴⁷ Brutus is unsure of his action as a leader. Even his inclination to go to Rome (*Romam*, inquit *sibi tibi videtur*) is tentative and he is easily persuaded *cito deiectus est* (2) to stay clear of Rome and rather take up his commission in Asia. Cf. Cicero's apparent punning on the word *brutus* when he blames Brutus for his seemingly insensible conduct and lack of foresight in not having eliminated Antonius as well: 'τὸν δ' αἰτίαν τῶν Βρούτων τις ἔχει. in *Octaviano, ut perspexi, satis ingeni, satis animi* ...' (Att. 15.12.2 c. June 10). In Cicero's view Octavianus (whom Cicero, for the first time in the letters, acknowledges as heir to Caesar), on the other hand, displays no lack of intelligence or sensibility.

⁴⁸ Att. 15.11: 'prophet, for you in particular, what signifies this journey here now?' Interestingly enough, this quotation (alluding not only to Cicero's visit to Brutus, but also to Cicero's metaphorical journey) calls to mind the literary motif of the prophet who has to undertake long journeys of the spirit in time and space, and is sometimes depicted with wings. Cf. for instance the drawing on an Etruscan bronze mirror (c. 400 BC) of a winged seer busy examining the liver of a sacrificial animal – the engraving reads: Xalxas, probably referring to Kalchas, the Greek prophet of the *Iliad*. The concept of the winged seer could also relate to Plato's description of the true philosopher as one who solely desires wisdom and truth (*Rep.* 485a-e), and whose mind has 'wings': μόνη πεποῦται ἡ τοῦ φιλοσόφου διάνοια (*Phaedr.* 249c). The philosopher's 'winged thought' thus becomes metaphor for the quest for true knowledge. Cf. Szlezák (2000:74). Like Plato's philosopher who experiences rebuke on earth and longs to stretch his 'wings of the mind' in flight, Cicero's journey brought about not only his wish to 'fly away', but also the desire to know the truth, that is to understand divine will.

⁴⁹ Cf. Att. 9.10 (March 49): '*evolare cupio*' where Cicero alludes to Plato (*Ep.* 7.348a) who describes virtual captivity under a reign of tyranny. Cicero himself was a virtual captive of the political circumstances from which he longed to escape, and in August 46 (*Fam.* 7.28.2) he calls himself a rare white bird (*avem albam*) in captivity seeking the freedom of his library (*abdo me in bibliothecam*). Cf. Att. 9.15.3.

⁵⁰ From 46 onwards Cicero often applies this quotation (from an unidentified Latin play) to both Caesar and his followers: In August 46, in a letter to M. Curius who left for Greece, far from those who held power in Rome: '*ubi nec Pelopidarum*' (*Fam.* 7.28.2), and again in January 44: *hinc ipse evolare cupio et aliquo pervenire 'ubi nec Pelopidarum'* (*Fam.* 7.30.1). On April 22, 44 Cicero describes Octavius as an extension of Caesar's legacy, one whose influence will be to the detriment of the *res publica*: '*quem nego posse <esse> bonum civem*'. Hence Cicero once more expresses his desire to escape: *itaque exire aveo 'ubi nec Pelopidarum'* (Att. 14.12.2).

⁵¹ Att. 15.29.

journey signifies.⁵² Here it appears that the journey has become not only his flight from danger but that it also signifies the end of his quest for clarity. The answer to Cicero's initial question was already given by himself on June 7, when he expressed his desire to escape the 'curse of the house of Pelops'. He seems to have realised, even then, that the days of the *res publica* were over, and that all that had remained was his view that the recent play for power not only revoked the curse of 'serial murder', but the curse of 'regicide' as well.

On August 19 Cicero informs Atticus that, while staying over in Leucopetra, he had been given the news that a full meeting of the senate would take place on January 1, requiring the presence of all ex-consuls and ex-praetors. By September, in a letter to Plancus, Cicero can prosaically claim that he has been recalled by Rome herself '*rei publicae sum voce revocatus*' (*Fam.* 10.1.1). Such personification of the state by Cicero is not uncommon⁵³ and the voice of the personified republic rings loud in *De officiis*⁵⁴ where we see Cicero vigorously at work in a last effort to save the face of the republic of old for posterity, in answer to the call made to him in his younger days.⁵⁵

Yet the divide between theorising about, and the practice of, political power became ever broader in Cicero's life. In the end he was forced to expand the former because he was increasingly powerless to extend the latter. It remains to be examined to what extent Cicero himself was aware of these tensions, and whether it was from instinct or from a set purpose that during these months he was concentrating more on advising others than on himself playing an active role.

When at last Cicero once more tried to step into the arena of active politics in his opposition to Marcus Antonius, he inherited the leading position that he had intended to prepare for Brutus. Cicero's final effort to save what he conceived of as an ordered government led to his own destruction and that of the *res publica*. An analysis of this topic, however, would require a separate dissertation, therefore the next part of this

⁵² *Att.* 16.6.2.

⁵³ For the imagery of the voice of *res publica* calling to Cicero cf. *Cat.* 1.27 ff., *Red. Sen.* 34, 39, *Red. Pop.* 10, *Sest.* 52, *ad Brut.* 1.15.5.

⁵⁴ *Off.* 3.121.

⁵⁵ '*interea cursus, quos prima a parte iuventae quosque adeo consul virtute animoque petisti, hos retine atque auge famam laudesque bonorum*' (*Cons.* 3. fr. 8).

dissertation concentrates on Cicero's awareness of the ebbing tide of republican government, and its final demise under Caesar, before a new wave of civil war surged onto the Roman political shores, drowning the old *res publica* in a flood of imperial autocracy.

It remains, then, to examine Cicero's reactions to the final ascendancy of Caesar and his acceptance of the death of the *res publica*, also in his retrospective view of the person whom he saw responsible for its *coup de grace*, his ruminations after the death of Caesar.

III. EXITUS

Quod ita contigit

11. Cicero: ‘*non multo, inquam, secus possum vaticinari*’¹

As we have seen in the discussion above, the voluminous correspondence shows that Cicero in time discerned the manifestation of a political pattern of change that was inevitably to transform the republican tradition of democratic government into a state of absolute and autocratic rule. This growing perception of his, in itself remarkable in a society where the traditional ruling class by default denied their acceptance of both the loss of traditional liberty and their submission to powerful protectors, also finds expression in Cicero’s philosophical writings from the fifties onwards. In *De republica*, for instance, Cicero is content to emphasise, as a warning, the danger of absolute rule degenerating into tyranny (*Rep.* 1.44). This fine thread of warning was picked up again in *De amicitia* when the actual political situation of 44 BC proved that, with the removal of an autocrat, the underlying political fabric remained in force. Inaction on the side of the liberators probably indicated to Cicero that a counter-revolution was not to be part of the political agenda.²

This realisation probably underlay Cicero’s belief that the established Roman political tradition had been deflected from its natural course: ‘*deflexit iam aliquantulum de spatio curriculoque consuetudo maiorum*’ (*Amic.* 40), and that this process had had its origins in the period of the Gracchi when they were striving towards *regnum*. Cicero here appears to have accepted the Polybian view that the Roman constitution, having reached perfection during the second century, was now in a process of rapid decline: ‘*serpit deinde res, quae proclivis ad perniciem, cum semel coepit, labitur*’ (*Amic.* 41).³

¹ *Att.* 8.11.3.

² Cf. Brutus’ assurance to the crowd that the assassination had been accomplished solely to restore a free constitution, and that the ‘liberators’ had no ambition for power (Dio Cass. 44.21.1).

³ Cf. Chapter Five above.

According to Cicero the signs of change were already evident in 129 BC, for in the prediction of one of his 'spokesmen', Laelius, forebodings of political disaster become a *post eventum* prediction of the harsh reality of the political situation of 44 BC:

quod quidem, ut res ire coepit, haud scio an aliquando futurum sit. Mihi autem non minori curae est, qualis res publica post mortem meam futura, quam qualis hodie sit (*Amic.* 43).⁴

This is followed by what must be seen as a sharp propagandistic attack against the Caesarians' notion of the duties of friendship (44) – the main thrust of his argument indicating that liberty comes before friendship. At this stage, then, Cicero appears still to have tried to influence public opinion and also the opinion of the tyrannicides.

This apparent intention seems absent from *De officiis*. One gets the impression that while working on *De officiis*, Cicero had capitulated and accepted the loss of the old order despite the retention of its fabric. That for which he had stood in the past was not to be regained and was being obliterated by the rule of the ever-emerging powerful. Thus *De officiis* appears to be intended as both a testimony to a lost, ideal past and as the documentation of its final downfall at the hands of Caesar. This is evident in Cicero's moral attacks on the political conduct of the deceased Caesar (*Off.* 1.26 ambition, 1.43 violation of property rights, 3.83-85 moral and political conduct).⁵

Wholly absent is the slight optimism that marks Cicero's letters of May 44, for instance, where he commends Brutus to Dolabella, praising his outstanding ability, fine manners, honesty and consistency (*Fam.* 9.14.5) – all attributes that are the hallmark of a bygone era. By September, in a letter to Q. Cornificius (*Fam.* 12.22.2) Cicero could, with a certain nostalgia, but also with an overwhelming sense of despondency, refer to such traditional virtues as their only hope: '*spes tamen una est aliquando populum Romanum maiorum simile fore*'.

⁴ Cf. Cicero's letter to Brutus (1.2a.3) where he displays the same sentiment, indicating the shortness of time remaining for himself and his concern for the future of Rome.

⁵ Yet in a letter to C. Cassius Longinus in early October 44 Cicero refers to the defunct Caesar as *dominus*, the importance here being that the appellation now conveys a positive judgement: Caesar now posthumously deserves the appellation, as opposed to Antonius (a 'fellow slave'), who, from Cicero's point of view, will never lay claim to anything better than whatever his slavemlike mentality allows him: '*dominum ferre non potuimus, conservo servimus*' (*Fam.* 12.3.2). A year later, during October 43, Cicero accuses Antonius as being unfit even to serve well: '*non modo non servis sed etiam regnas*' (*Phil.* 2.35).

Cicero confesses his submission to the idea of the republic as a lost cause nowhere more clearly than in his correspondence from October 44 BC onwards. In early October Cicero describes the present state of the republic as entrapped within the confines of the military (*rei publicae in castris*), deeply afflicted from the loss of the sound and healthy qualities associated with a free constitution (*sanae et salvae rei publicae*). In fact, all hope that Cicero previously had is gone ‘*atque antehac quidem sperare saltem licebat; nunc etiam id ereptum est*’ (*Fam.* 12.23.3).

By October 28, Cicero, apparently submitting to the idea of the republic having perished (*Att.* 15.13a.1), states that he is devoting himself to philosophical theorising (φιλοσοφοῦμεν *quid enim aliud?*) and the writing of *De officiis* (τὰ περὶ τοῦ καθ<ήκ>οντος) at a time when he despairs over the hopelessness of the present political circumstances: ‘*de quo [re publica reciperata] quid sperem non audeo scribere*’ (3). Cicero appears all too clearly to have accepted that the traditional republican order was not to be restored.

By November 3 all that remained for Cicero was disappointment in Brutus, when Octavianus took the opportunity that Cicero would have preferred Brutus to have taken, by offering himself as leader of the republicans. At this stage Cicero probably had realised that this was a turning-point in the political history of Rome, a golden opportunity which Brutus let slip through his fingers: ‘*o Brute, ubi es? quantam εὐκαιρίαν amittis!*’ (*Att.* 16.8.2). Earlier Cicero had not foreseen Octavianus’ ascendance: ‘*non equidem hoc divinavi, sed aliquid tale putavi fore*’ (2), but had suspected within reason that something of the kind would happen. It seems that, for Cicero, Brutus was not the obvious future leader for he exemplified too much of the old political dispensation, in which inactivity had to be replaced with forceful action.⁶

By November 12 (*Att.* 16.14.1) Cicero agrees with the view of Atticus that, with Octavianus having gained the upper hand, the senate will not be much better off than they were on March 17 when Caesar’s *acta* were approved. Thus Cicero implies that Octavianus’ military mastery will be an extension of Caesar’s. That is, Cicero recognises

⁶ This acceptance of what was fast becoming a fact for Cicero is evident in his search for a champion to remove the threat posed by Antonius. Although Octavianus’ march on Rome in November 44 lifted republican spirits, Cicero, during May 43, still distrusting the young heir to Caesar’s legacy, turned to L. Munatius Plancus (*Fam.* 10.13, 10.14, 10.19) and D. Brutus (*Fam.* 11.12) urging them to dispose of Antonius – thus putting a final end to the civil war.

in Octavianus a new breed of power play (*valde tibi adsentior, si multum possit Octavianus, multo firmitus acta tyranni comprobatur ire quam in Telluris*), different from the leadership of, for instance, Brutus (*atque id contra Brutum fore*). Octavianus' conduct alarms Cicero, who suspects Octavianus of imitating Caesar. That this was his intention he clearly betrayed when he promised the Roman people at a *contio* that he would equal the honours of his father, Caesar. This becomes a manifestation of the unthinkable for Cicero: and he exclaims 'sooner destruction for me than a rescuer such as this!'⁷

At this stage, then, in 44 Cicero appears to have recognised the end result of a political process that had been staring him in the face ever since the early fifties, when the alliance of Pompeius, Crassus and Caesar reigned supreme in Roman politics: '*quae si essent extrema, tamen esset nimium mali; sed ea natura rei est ut haec extrema esse non possint*' (*Att.* 2.17.1). The major difference was, first, that amongst the aristocracy it was then unthinkable even to mention the possibility of a new political dispensation, and, second, that in 59 Cicero's judgement was clouded by his own consciousness of personal danger. By 44 this consciousness (perhaps unwisely so) had fully retreated to make complete way for the general unease which increasingly breathed from the letters of fifty onwards.

Still, in July 59, amidst the threatening danger from Clodius, and his own grave political circumstances, Cicero was prepared even then to proffer his opinion in a letter to Atticus: '*hoc, opinor: certi sumus perisse omnia*' (*Att.* 2.19.5). He had then no other option than to face the reality of the palpable power of the major players of the era. At that stage, he confessed that he had, to a certain degree, to accept what he had suspected even earlier: '*quid enim ἀκκιζόμεθα tam diu?*' but had not wanted to acknowledge while clapping a blind eye to the truth: '*ego fortasse τυφλώττω et nimium τῷ καλῷ προσπέπονθα*' (1) whilst clinging too much to the good old traditions. One could say that Cicero's perceptions in the fifties were sharpened, because of personal danger, to sense in advance the ill-starred fate of the *res publica*.⁸

⁷ μηδὲ σωθείην ὑπὸ γε τοιούτου! (*Att.* 16.15.3).

⁸ This acute sense of foreboding is defined in *Div.* 1.65: '*Sagire enim sentire acute est; ... quia multa scire volunt, et sagaces dicti canes. Is igitur, qui ante sagit, quam oblata res est, dicitur praesagire, id est futura ante sentire.*' Cicero explains the verb *praesagire* as 'to sense in advance', a verb he never uses in relation to himself. In *Amic.* 14 Cicero describes Scipio as having had a premonition of his own approaching death (*praesagiret*), and Caelius, who had a reputation for relying on his own keen instincts, applies the verb (*praesagiebat*) to indicate possible future events (*Fam.* 8.10.1). Assuming that *praesagire* for Cicero literally means only

The recurrent thought present in Cicero's correspondence during this traumatic period is that of a perished dispensation where no hope for revival of the constitution remains: [*res publica*] *tota periit, omnia perdiderunt* [tresviri] (*Att.* 2.21.1 July 59), *re publica nihil desperatius* (2.25.2 September 59).

His sense of loss in 59 was tied in with Cicero's personal sense of loss. For Cicero, he himself was the republic during his consulate, and his banishment to him meant an end to the state as he had known it.⁹ Although this subjectivity of his diminishes after his return, the *Leitmotiv* of 'loss of the republic' remains and becomes strengthened over the years.¹⁰ A similar sense of loss is conveyed throughout Cicero's correspondence and finds expression in numerous quotations from the *Iliad*, especially book 22 from the speech of Hektor, who rejects the idea of fleeing from Achilles. It seems that Cicero, in fear of 'respectable' public opinion, that is, aristocratic opinion, can express his political forebodings only in correspondence with Atticus. Early in April 59, despite his sense of political loss, Cicero nevertheless appears to have resolved to fight for his Rome as did Hektor for Troy. Cicero plays with a recurring formula relating to Hektor's shamefastness in the face of criticism by his own people, particularly Polydamas:

αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρωάδας ἑλκεσιπέπλους'.¹¹ *quid enim nostri optimates, si qui reliqui sunt, loquentur? an me aliquo praemio de sententia esse deductum?* 'Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην ἀναθήσει' (*Att.* 2.5.1).¹²

October 50 writing from Athens:

‘αἰδέομαι’ non Pompeium modo sed ‘Τρῶας καὶ Τρωάδας’. ‘Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην καταθήσει’ (*Att.* 7.1.4).

'to sense in advance' (that implies discounting reason), one also has to assume that the term borders the realm of the divine (cf. *Div.* 1.123 '*praesagitione divina*'). It then is understandable that Cicero shows preference for words that convey certainty when he theorises on political matters. Thus we could say that whereas Cicero during the fifties was subconsciously prone to presaging, he was denying his own mantic talent. Only during the forties did he move toward practicing reasoned forecasting.

⁹ Cf. *Att.* 3.15.2 written in August from Thessalonica: '*desidero enim non mea solum neque meos sed me ipsum. quid enim sum?*'

¹⁰ *Att.* 4.18 in 54: '*nulla est res publica quae delectet, in qua acquiescam.*'

¹¹ Cf. *Il.* 6.442, 22.105.

¹² 'I fear the Trojans and their long-gowned wives Polydamas will be the first to cry me shame'. Cf. *Il.* 22.100.

January 49 writing from Formiae: ‘αἰδέομαι Τρῶας’ (*Att.* 7.12.3).¹³

By identifying himself with Homer’s Hektor one can assume that Cicero has, in the long run, subconsciously accepted defeat.

By April 43 Cicero finds it necessary (*illud necesse*) to inform Brutus about the nature of his thoughts (*quid sentirem*), and his judgement (*quo iudicio essem*) and to offer advice (*quaque sententia*) on the present state of war in general, for he now seems to observe, more so than previously, that though his own political aims in general correspond with those of Brutus, there are differences,¹⁴ the main difference being that Brutus, after the death of Caesar, placed the highest premium on conciliation and peace. This intended policy of peace and reconciliation Brutus advocated at the end of May the year before in a letter to Antonius explaining Caesar’s murder: ‘*nos ab initio spectasse otium nec quiquam aliud libertate communi quaesisse exitus declarat*’ (*Fam.* 11.2.2). Now in 43 (April 20) Cicero makes it clear to Brutus that he is not in favour of Brutus’ policy of clemency, which he sees as a major cause for lingering civil war: ‘*quod si clementes esse volumus, numquam deerunt bella civilia*’ (*Ad Brut.* 1.2.2), and on the same day, more forcefully this time, he distances himself from Brutus’ policy: *nec clementiae tuae concedo* (*Ad Brut.* 1.2a.2). That Caesar’s policy of *clementia* in the very recent past has proved, according to Cicero, to have been unsuccessful, goes without saying, neither does Cicero see any future prospect of its success: ‘*sed de hoc tu videris*’ (2). Clearly Cicero considers this statement of his to be valid, but at the same time he senses that Brutus is less convinced. His allusion to the *Trinummus* of Plautus in what follows, is less about his own political life as being defunct than it is about the need for Brutus’ future provision. The quotation purposely recalls the fatherly advice of Philto given to his son Lysiteles – only, in the letter Plautine moral edification becomes political instruction with a note of warning attached:

de me possum idem quod Plautinus pater in Trinummo: ‘mihi quidem aetas acta ferme est: tua istuc refert maxime’. opprimemini, mihi crede, Brute, nisi providetis. neque enim populum semper eundem habebitis neque senatum neque senatus ducem. haec ex oraculo Apollinis Pythi edita tibi puta. nihil potest esse verius (*Ad Brut.* 1.2a.3).

¹³ The same quotation also occurs in March 49 (*Att.* 8.16.2), June 45 (13.13.2) and July 45 (13.24.1).

¹⁴ *Ad Brut.* 2.5.1.

The emphasis here is not so much on caution to be exercised by Brutus, but on the need for him to act with *foresight*: ‘*opprimemini, mihi crede, Brute, nisi providetis*’. What is required in the present circumstances is the ability not only to acknowledge the past, but in the first place to plan ahead. At this time Cicero with confidence asserts his claim to prognostic political skill – a claim he previously made in 45 in a letter of political reassurance¹⁵ to Caesar: ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω *videre*.¹⁶ This wisdom both to interpret the past and predict what to face in future enables Cicero to describe with certainty an imminent change in the traditional Roman political scene: ‘*neque enim populum semper eundem habebitis neque senatum neque senatus ducem*’. The responsibility to deal with such a problem Cicero thrusts onto Brutus, while suggesting that his own era of political and especially of military action has passed: ‘*mihi quidem aetas acta ferme est*’.¹⁷ The future constitution of Rome still lies with the contesting Roman military leaders of whom Brutus was one (*tua istuc refert maxime*), and those still in the senatorial benches who supported the victor. If his advice is not heeded, Cicero warns that those among Brutus’ followers who remain in want of the required foresight, will be crushed (*opprimemini*).

The context of the Plautine allusion is of importance here. Philto’s words quoted by Cicero comes shortly after a long description of the moral degeneracy of his time. The warning seems to suggest that Brutus will be crushed by contemporaries of similar moral repute as those depicted by Plautus almost two centuries earlier.¹⁸ Plautus’ portrayal of the rapacity of the ruling class that we associate with the later object of Gracchan reforms, could not have varied much from Cicero’s own view of the recent past under the dictatorship of Caesar or even before. It also is consistent with Cicero’s criticism on the conduct of the Caesarians before and after Caesar’s death.¹⁹

¹⁵ As shown above (Chapter Nine section two) this unconventional letter of recommendation abounds with interplay between Homeric and Euripidean quotations, relaying a political message meant explicitly for Caesar: ‘*genere novo sum litterarum ad te usus ut intellegeres non vulgarem esse commendationem*’ (*Fam.* 13.15.3).

¹⁶ *Iliad* 1.343, *Od.* 24.452.

¹⁷ Plaut. *Trin.* 319.

¹⁸ Plautus *Trin.* 286-7: ‘*turbant, miscent mores mali: rapax avarus invidus sacrum profanum, publicum privatum habent, hiulca gens*’. Plautus could just as well have been describing the society of the fifties and forties of republican Rome: ‘*quod manu non queunt tangere tantum fas habent quo manus abstineant, cetera: rape trahe, fuge late – lacrimas haec mihi quom video eliciunt, quia ego ad hoc genus hominum duravi*’ (*Trin.* 290-3), ‘*nam hi mores maiorum laudant, eosdem luitant quos conlaudant*’ (295). This was not far from the sentiments expressed by Cicero during the last years of the republic.

¹⁹ *Off.* 1.26 ambition, 1.43 violation of property rights, 3.83-85 moral and political conduct.

Cicero casts his prophetic warning as not only truly oracular (*haec ex oraculo Apollinis Pythi edita tibi puta. nihil potest esse verius*), but also as a statement which will prove to be not easily altered.²⁰ Cicero implies that his intention is to signify that Brutus' task of saving the republic is not impossible, but, as history has shown, that it will not be without obstacles.

By June 43 it was evident that Cicero's advice to Brutus was of no avail and that their differences in political outlook had become more serious. Cicero, not without reservations, decided to show public support for Octavianus. This was probably the only option left for Cicero, who now had to take the brunt of Brutus' accusation, namely that he had turned his back on his own declared policy, which held that tyranny must be abolished solely for the purpose to reinstate rule by the state (*Ad Brut.* 1.16).²¹ However, what may have seemed to Brutus as a *volte face* in Cicero's policy could actually be Cicero's own admission and acceptance that his former perception of a terminally ill republic was still valid and that the process of deterioration was now finally irreversible. This view, that a revival of the traditional political order was no longer possible, was apparently also expressed by Atticus (so Brutus in his correspondence with Atticus), who pointed out the improbability of the republic ever regaining its health, even in the event of its regaining its former freedom (*Ad Brut.* 1.17.3).²² Cicero's backing of Octavianus could now be seen as a forced acceptance of a new dispensation, where a faint hope existed that through Octavianus, and perhaps also through Cicero's own influence with him, elements of the old order could be integrated into the new. This, however, does not

²⁰ Cf. *Tusc.* 1.17.5; two years previously Cicero refers to the Pythian oracle as making certain and unalterable statements '*quasi Pythius Apollo, certa ut sint et fixa quae dixerit*'. Elsewhere in his philosophical works Cicero similarly emphasises the veracity of the Pythian oracle, for instance, when he attests to the truth of prophecy in *Div.* 1.37 and when he draws an interesting parallel in *Off.* 2.77.6 between Sparta and Rome, where it appears that Cicero emphasises that the Pythian prophecy regarding the Spartans' downfall because of their avarice should be taken as a warning to all other wealthy states.

²¹ Cf. the torrent of accusations piled upon Cicero by Brutus in this letter.

²² Apparently at some time or other Atticus indicated his view that the republic was terminally ill. Brutus says '*nec ignoro quid sentias in re publica et quam desper<es neque liber>atam quoque sanari putes posse*'. This sense of despair displayed by Atticus is noticed by Cicero in 44 after the death of Caesar: Atticus seemingly in May (*Att.* 15.3.1) considered submitting to the victors (*quod scribis parendum victoribus*) and later in July (*Att.* 16.3.1) must have remarked, somewhat cynically, that his trust now lay with his money rather than with republican worth, for they would sooner find themselves abandoned by the republic than by money (*deseremur ocius a re publica quam a re familiari*). A recurrent theme in the correspondence of both Brutus and Cicero at this time is that one evil has been replaced only by another.

seem to be the view taken by Brutus, who states his intention to remain engaged in the pursuit of war, fighting against whatever undermines the ancestral law that forbids absolute rule by anyone: '*dominum ne parentem quidem maiores nostri voluerunt esse*', that is, any form of monarchy, extraordinary commands, absolutism and power above laws: '*hoc est cum regno et imperiis extraordinariis et dominatione et potentia quae supra leges se esse velit*' (*Ad Brut.* 1.17.6). This line of thinking was consistent with what had been Cicero's former declarations.

By mid June Cicero remarks that the state will not recover from its 'illness', in fact, it is deteriorating fast: '*ingravescit enim in dies intestinum malum*' (*Ad Brut.* 1.10.1). For Cicero, the era of the republic has finally been eclipsed: '*rei publicae vicem dolebo, quae immortalis esse debet*' (5).

Evidently it must have seemed to Cicero, that to all outward appearances, Rome had returned to the days of Romulus, when he was hailed a 'good king'. For centuries Romulus had been the foremost prototype of the benevolent ruler, despite his bearing the hated title of '*rex*'. This reputation lasted well into the first century BC, when Roman propaganda still centered on his military exploits and good statesmanship. This perception, however, changed in the aftermath of the Sullan civil wars and the negative propaganda from that time on focused on the murder of Remus, linking the first Roman fratricide with civil war. Cicero's attitude towards Romulus vacillates between accepting this shift towards negative allusions and rehabilitation of the founder figure.²³

Cicero's moral judgement of the Roman founding myths shows significant political colouring in both the cases of L. Iunius Brutus, first consul of Rome, and of Romulus. Cicero places emphasis on the contrast in motive between the founders of respectively the Roman republic and the Roman monarchy, two conflicting forms of constitutional rule. Brutus is cast as acting justly not only by deposing his colleague L. Tarquinius Collatinus, widower of the virtuous Lucretia, but also by forcing him into exile on the

²³ Caesar, however, reversed this process of negative propaganda and initiated a process of rehabilitation of the Romulus myth, carried on by Octavianus when he saw to it that his 'father' was raised to divine status. Apart from lingering negative sentiments surfacing in the works of, for instance, Ovid, Horace and Lucan, the Augustan poets took this process further when they turned Romulus into a symbol of reconciliation and unity. Vergil, for instance, alludes to Romulus and Remus as twin founders of Rome: *Remo cum fratre Quirinus iura dabunt* (*Aen.* 1.292) as does Livy (10.23.13). Cf. Wiseman (1991:115-24) and De Rose Evans (1992:93-103) on Augustan propaganda concerning Romulus.

premise that all remnants of monarchy should be obliterated in the interest of the state.²⁴ Also, Brutus' action is drawn as being both politically expedient and morally right,²⁵ unlike that of Romulus, whom Cicero condemns for the killing of his brother out of sheer political ambition: '*cui cum visum esset utilius solum quam cum altero regnare, fratrem interemit*' (*Off.* 3.41). This, however, is not mere moral condemnation on Cicero's part of the founder of Rome, the royal *exemplum* whom the deceased Caesar had used to his own political advantage as potent political propaganda.²⁶ Cicero recaps the Ennian version²⁷ of the Romulus and Remus myth, harking back to an era when having two leaders was very much the Roman custom, and when any one individual who strove towards absolute rule was regarded with disdain. Thus Cicero presents the Romulus myth as the primeval paradigm of Roman absolute rule,²⁸ his own dark perception of a past that preordained

²⁴ *Off.* 3.40.9: '*cum autem consilium hoc principes cepissent, cognationem Superbi nomenque Tarquiniorum et memoriam regni esse tollendam, quod erat utile, patriae consulere, id erat honestum*'.

²⁵ With his blatant exoneration of L. Brutus (earlier in *De republica* 2.53 Cicero still stresses that Collatinus was exiled *innocent* of crime: *Conlatinum innocentem ... expulerunt*) Cicero reasserts his view that in times when the safety of the republic (as he sees it) is at stake, moral law transcends constitutional law. Cf. Cicero's much criticised conduct relating to the execution of the Catilinarian conspirators without trial in 63, and his condonation of the raising of private armies and the bribing of troops in January 43 (*Phil.* 3.3, 6).

²⁶ Caesar often drew parallels between himself and Romulus. It is almost unnecessary to quote instances of his arrogation of royalty. He is, for example, said to have worn a purple-bordered tunic with additional fringed sleeves (Suet. *Caes.* 45, Dio Cass. 44.6) and regalia allegedly worn by Tarquinius Priscus (Zonar. 7.8); he was also allowed a gilded chair in the Curia (Suet. *Caes.* 76, Dio Cass. 44.6); in the triumph of 46, returning from Spain, white horses (considered a claim to superhuman status used by both Persian and Greek kings) drew his chariot (Dio Cass. 43.14.3); and a statue of him was placed in the temple of Quirinus (Cic. *Att.* 12.45, 13.28, Dio Cass. 43.45.3). Admittedly, the only extant contemporary reference occurs in Cicero's letters to Atticus, but we may assume that the historians based their statements on these and perhaps other contemporary accounts. The similarity between Plutarch (*Num.* 16) and Cicero *Rep.* 2.25-7 cannot be overlooked. Both Cicero and Plutarch contrast Numa as a peace-seeking king who decided to temper the bellicose Roman nature and its passion for conflict, typical of the bellicose Romulus (*hominesque Romanos instituto Romuli bellicis studiis ut vidit* [Numa] *incensos*) by dividing the land won by conquest among the citizens in the hope that the benefits of land cultivation would pre-empt peace.

²⁷ *Ann.* 1.47.1-2 (Skutsch): '*curantes magna cum cura tum cupientes / regni dant operam simul auspicio augurioque*'. In *Off.* 1.8.26 Cicero uses the following line from Ennius '*nulla sancta societas / nec fides regni est*' to describe Caesar's *regnum*.

²⁸ During the Augustan age this trend was extended in two ways, the second being that poets and historiographers increasingly interpreted the past in terms of oracular lore and language, thus linking the mythical past with their contemporary history. Lucan, for instance, extends the mythic connection between the murder of Remus and the civil wars by exploiting the religious paradigm of combat and murder for kingship as the tradition was practiced by early Latin communities. Green (1994) has shown that this tradition (the *rex nemorensis*) existed and was associated with the Roman king Servius Tullius. She argues that Lucan incorporates this cult of mortal combat to attain *regnum* in his epic of civil war, showing that in order to fulfil Caesar's destiny to rule Rome, Pompeius had to become the sacrificial victim.

the future fate of Roman politics.²⁹ Seemingly, in Cicero's view, the 'Romulus' of *De officiis* (impersonalised and distanced as *at eo rege qui urbem condidit*)³⁰ founder of Roman monarchy, set a criminal precedent (*peccavit*) which by now has become fixed in the present, firmly implanted as an act of aggression against all decent behaviour (*omisit ... pietatem et humanitatem*) when brotherly love and humane feeling were discarded for the sake of power.³¹

Here Cicero's apparent normal use of *condere*³² recalls in tone the more violent associations of the word, that is, 'fatal stabbing', as found in Vergil who is thought to have been the innovator of the new meaning of *condere*: 'to stab or bury a sword in...'.³³ Since Romulus as the original founder of Rome killed his brother in a power struggle, the act of founding is associated from the beginning with violent killing, which for Cicero could signify both the beginning and the end of Rome.³⁴ Later in *De officiis* Cicero

²⁹ In 46 BC Caesar celebrated a quadruple triumph (Gaul, the Pontic war with Pharnaces at Zela, the African war against Juba, and war against Ptolemy in Alexandria). The victory at Zela gave Caesar the opportunity to emphasise his reputation of invincibility with the well-known apothegm *veni, vidi, vici* and was proven in his victories in the East and his campaign against Britain (55-54 BC). In the words of Vergil (*Aen.* 1.289) this military success earned him a place among the stars (*hunc tu olim caelo spoliis Orientis onustum accipies securus*), to become the first Roman since Romulus to be deified, thus also becoming the first Roman to whom the Hellenistic form of katasterism was extended. This linking of myth and history as found in Jupiter's prophecy which spells out the destined future of Caesar (*Aen.* 1.286-91), is also evident in Cicero's comments regarding Caesar's apotheosis, but with an ironic twist. Instead of eulogy we find disbelief and contempt shown for this kind of 'superstition': '*Nec vero volgi atque imperitorum inscitiam despicere possum, cum ea considero ... pisces Syri venerantur, omne fere genus bestiarum Aegyptii consecraverunt; iam vero in Graecia multos habent ex hominibus deos Romulum nostrum aliosque compluris, quos quasi novos et adscripticios cives in caelum receptos putant*' (*DND* 3.39). If Cicero subscribed to the Platonic conception from the *Timaeus* that the 'just man after death returns to the stars' (in Chrysippus' view 'the gods themselves'), the recent addition of Caesar to the ranks of these gods must have seemed cruel irony to Cicero who considered that Caesar was violating all the rules. See below note 35.

³⁰ The identity of this *rex* Cicero reserves for later, giving greater force to the revelation of the identity of the person actually targeted (the deified Caesar) with the accusation of having emulated the crimes of Romulus.

³¹ *Off.* 3.41.1.

³² The founding of Rome is commonly described in Latin by the verb *condere*. Cf. the high frequency in Cicero: *Cat.* 3.2.9, 3.15.4, 4.14.2, *Red. Sen.* 24.19, *Dom.* 50.11, *Vat.* 14.8, 17.7, 34.2, 36.15, *Rep.* 1.25.18, 2.5.1, 10, 12, 2.18.10, *Brut.* 72.4, 127.9, *Tusc.* 1.3.5, 7, 5.7.11, *Div.* 2.98.8, *Phil.* 2.13.2, 3.9.2, 5.17.3.

³³ Cf. Ovid who uses *condere* both to mean 'establish cities' (*Met.* 14.459) and 'stab to death' (*Met.* 12.295, 13.392). For the use of *condere* meaning 'to bury the sword' in an opponent's breast cf. James (1995:623-36).

³⁴ Reading *condidit* in the sense of 'burying', Cicero could not unlikely have hinted that Romulus' act of 'founding' was meant to prefigure the 'burial' of Rome in the sense that it laid the foundation for the destruction of Rome. For Cicero's use of *condo* associated with burial: *Leg.* 2.56.6, 2.57.5, *Tusc.* 1.108.3.

alludes to Caesar's habit of quoting from Euripides the following lines uttered by Eteocles. He gives the Latin version:

'Nam si violandum est ius, regnandi gratia,
Violandum est; aliis rebus pietatem colas.'³⁵

The speaker of these lines (either Eteocles or Caesar – both could be castigated for their involvement in civil war) deserved, in Cicero's view, the death penalty (*capitalis* 3.82.19) for having committed the most abominable of all crimes: '*quod omnium sceleratissimum fuerit*' (20). With this crime, Cicero informs us, the accused exempts himself par excellence, for he, this person who desired to be both king of the Romans and master of all nations: '*qui rex populi Romani dominusque omnium gentium esse concupiverit*' (*Off.* 3.83.3-4), who also succeeded in accomplishing his aim (*idque perfecerit* 5), committed the most foul of murders, that of the fatherland (*foedissimum et taeterrimum parricidium patriae* 13). This crime exceeds even the fratricide mentioned earlier in *Off.* 3.41 when Cicero by implication imputes the blame to the deceased Caesar for his role in the campaign to rule Rome that resulted in the destruction not of a brother, but of his son-in-law Pompeius. Seen against the immediate political background of *De officiis*, the identity of the accused need no longer be speculated about.³⁶ In hindsight the deceased Caesar was another Romulus, guilty of killing his 'brother' Pompeius.

Cicero's version here deviates sharply from his idealised portrait of Romulus in *De republica* and other philosophical works, where Romulus is usually depicted as a just

³⁵ Cicero's version in *Off.* 3.82.17-18: 'for if it is just to do wrong, wrong must be done for the sake of rule; with regard to other things respect piety', is an adaptation from *Phoen.* 524-5. εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι / κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν, τὰλλα δ'εὐσεβεῖν χρεών. 'for if it is necessary to do wrong, to do wrong for the sake of power is most virtuous: in all other things there must be piety'. It is noticeable that, although the Roman context could have required *fas* (divine law) with its religious overtones, Cicero chooses to translate the neutral *χρή* with the Latin that denotes human *ius*. The adaptation serves the purpose of criticising unjust action in the service of political ambition as exemplified by Caesar's rule. Plato maintained that the most difficult form of rule to endure was that of lawless monarchy μοναρχία ἄνομος (*Pol.* 302e). The nature of Caesar's rule in the light of his habit of quoting the Euripidean lines above, could constitute the worst form of monarchy, that is, tyranny, in Cicero's view (*Rep.* 1.35-71). Plato had equated life under tyranny with the worst form of slavery (*Rep.* 8.564a), a metaphor also used by both Cicero and Brutus in their respective criticism of Caesarian rule (*Ad Brut.* 1.16, 1.17). According to Plutarch, Brutus used the term *monarchia paranomos* (*Brut.* 34.5.7) in reference to Caesar's monarchy which he describes as 'extra-legal'. Such arrogation of power could become a philosophical rationale for tyrannicide. Platonism promotes constitutional reform by whatever means possible. This is also consistent with Cicero's justification of tyrannicide as expressed in *Off.* 3.19.

³⁶ It has been noted (Dyck 1996:602) that Cicero in his denunciations of Caesar tends to omit or postpone mentioning his name, with greater effect.

king, a benefactor, deified for his merit as founder of Rome.³⁷ Cicero's positive portrayal of Romulus in public probably concealed a negative attitude present in himself since the late sixties when Roman politics markedly displayed its inherent 'Romulan' characteristics in a sequel to the Sullan turmoil, the Romans once again pursuing war as a custom. Even during the fifties when Cicero still took a positive line in his portrayal of Romulus, he stated that, for Romans under the rule of Romulus, the pursuit of war was customary (*Rep.* 2.25.8). In June 60, in a letter to Atticus, Cicero had expressed harsh criticism against the Rome of Romulus, while contrasting Plato's ideal state (*Platonis πολιτεία*) with the dirty politics (*Romuli faece*) of past and present day Rome.³⁸ In *De Divinatione* 2 (written after Caesar's death) Cicero for the first time since his earlier positive portrayal of Romulus seems to take a different line, implying perhaps that Romulus could have been considered guilty of displaying a tendency towards dissimulation and duplicity by cheating as an augur, manipulating the outcome of auguries.³⁹ *Condere* could therefore also be exploited by Cicero in the sense of 'conceal', creating the impression that Romulus had cheated his way into monarchy.

Apparently Cicero's reinterpretation of the Roman myth of Romulus reflects the anti-monarchic feeling prevalent at the time. During the political incertitude of the forties Cicero then seems to have concluded that he was witnessing the dreadful signs of a return to Roman monarchy. This perception is indicated in his letters of the period, when Caesar's handling of power and his blatant display of absolute rule⁴⁰ provoked criticism

³⁷ The idealised picture of Romulus frequents the pages of especially *De republica* where Romulus is mentioned as the founder of Rome: *Rep.* 1.58.10, 13, 2.4.4, 2.51.3; *Div.* 1.3.8, 1.30.9, 10, 1.31.2, 2.98.8, *DND* 3.5.23; a just king: 1.64.5, 3.47.14, an augur *Rep.* 2.17.1, *Div.* 1.105.14, 15, 1.107.1, 3, 8, 1.108.10, 2.73.10, 2.80.1, 14, *Leg.* 2.33.11; a ruler who acted with wisdom *Rep.* 2.10.2, 2.11.3 and heeded the advice of the 'fathers' 2.14.5, 11, 2.16.3 and also shared power 2.50.6, 9.

³⁸ *Att.* 2.1.8. Cicero's criticism here is mainly directed at Cato, whose patriotism, according to Cicero, blinds him to the defects of the republic. For Cicero, Cato's speeches before the senate portray an idealism associated with Plato's ideal state rather than with the realities of Roman politics. The Romulan factor was not to be ignored.

³⁹ Cf. Barchiesi's suggestion (1997:155-164) that this tendency towards duplicity and simulation in Romulus was exactly the impression created by Ovid's version of the Romulus myth in the *Fasti*. Romulus is twice shown as deceitful: firstly by laughing off in apparent good humour his defeat by Remus, and secondly, by revealing with great pathos and a sudden flood of tears his 'hidden devotion' at the funeral of Remus (4.849-52). Barchiesi ingeniously suggests a slight amendment in word spacing: *sustinet, et pietas dis simulata patet* (850), leaving the reader with the impression of a very cold and calculating Romulus – the prototypical Roman ruler that is to be found both in Cicero's depiction of an unjust Caesar and his expressed distrust of the young Octavius who was to carry on Caesar's legacy.

⁴⁰ This perception is indicated in his letters from the period. In 46 Cicero writes to Q. Ligarius and relates the incident (that took place during his visit to Caesar to ask for the reinstatement of

from aristocratic quarters. Small wonder then that Cicero saw it fit in 44 to include in his *De divinatione* what to him may have seemed appropriate excerpts from his own *De consulatu suo* written in 60:⁴¹

tum quis non artis scripta ac monumenta volutans
voces tristificas chartis promebat Etruscis?
omnes civilem generosa stirpe profectam
vitare ingentem cladem pestemque monebant,
tum legum exitium constanti voce ferebant.

Bolstered by increasing signs of autocracy, the implications of events witnessed by Cicero nearly fifteen years previously now gained in significance to form the by now predictable repetitive pattern of Rome's inevitable march to monarchy, a pattern that was dictated, as with Marius, Sulla and Pompeius, by the authority of a single man who had achieved supremacy when the Roman armies had given their allegiance to their generals instead of to Rome. Having accepted this outcome of events, Cicero probably found consolation in the thought that he had foreseen it as the inevitable consequence of civil war (*Att.* 10.7.1) and he appears to have resolved for the time being to bear tyranny with dignity (*Fam.* 4.9).

Ligarius) where the brothers and relations of the latter prostrated themselves at the feet of Caesar: '*fratres et propinqui tui iacerent ad pedes*' (*Fam.* 6.14.2). Similar terminology reminiscent of suppliants seeking royal favour is used in Cicero's letter to Sulpicius (*Fam.* 4.4). Here C. Metellus throws himself at the feet of Caesar while the senate as a body approaches him in suppliant attitude. During 44 (a period that in Cicero's view increasingly witnessed signs of despotism) Cicero, in a letter to Curio (*Fam.* 7.30.1), accuses Caesar of undermining electoral procedure by elevating C. Caninus to the position of consul, and criticises his choosing of magistrates for the next two years while he was in command of a Parthian expedition (*Att.* 14.6.2).

⁴¹ *Div.* 1.20, *Cons.* 2 *fr.* 6.47-53.

12. Conspectus

The purpose of this study has been to examine whether Cicero was aware of a larger pattern of political events and whether he was able to recognise and evaluate implications and possible consequences. It posed the question whether Cicero, as metaphorically a *haruspex*, understood the message of political decline signalled by the ‘entrails’ of the ‘carcass’ of the *res publica*, and whether this ability in its turn enabled him to anticipate future political development in Rome. To judge this, it was proposed to apply certain criteria.

In the first place, the *theoretical input* of Cicero’s predecessors, their perceptions of constitutional development, and of Roman politics in particular, as well as Cicero’s own perception of their political theories, had to be considered. Next, what had to be determined was whether or not Cicero had the ability to reason along these different theoretical lines, second, whether he was able to distinguish between potentially different political outcomes, and finally, to what degree his later overtly political theoretical discussion appeared as the result of earlier reasoning. Then, the degree of *consistency* and/or *inconsistency* in Cicero’s attitude to the political movers whose activities he was observing, needed to be considered. This included both his approach to his correspondents, and his own awareness and justification of changes in either aspect. Connected to the criterion of consistency, the criterion of *objectivity* versus *subjectivity* was to be taken into account. Of importance here were Cicero’s personal reactions to events as he became aware of them, and the degree to which he attempted to conceptualise the ‘ideal state’, without reference to personal advantage. Closely related to both the criteria of consistency and objectivity, the criterion of *comparison* implied evaluation of the depth of complexity and variety in Cicero’s interpretation of Roman political trends. The extent to which Cicero’s conclusions matched or contrasted with the conclusions of other observers like Caelius and Atticus needed to be examined, as well as the extent to which his reasoning contrasted or agreed with the views put forward by Caesar in his *De bello civili*. The final category used to judge Cicero’s analytical ability, was the criterion of *integration*, that is, his ability to draw the threads together. Consideration needed to be given both to the degree to which Cicero integrated disparate aspects of the problems he perceived, and the degree to which such integration led to a projection of future trends, and finally to the degree to which Cicero’s earlier judgements

in his quotidian correspondence were reflected in his later considered and overtly theoretical work.

The dissertation refrained from applying the above criteria in a mechanistic ‘check-list’ fashion. Rather, these criteria worked as a set of principles underlying discussion, in which different criteria gained prominence during the examination of differing aspects of Cicero’s thought and actions. It is now necessary to reconsider these criteria consecutively, and to relate them to conclusions drawn in the body of the work.

First, on **Cicero’s ability to theorise**, what I have attempted to show is that Cicero was indeed able to reason along different political lines, and that his reasoning and the consequent conclusions drawn from such theorising were firmly based on his knowledge of philosophy. This enabled him to present alternative views on political issues. Chapter Five confirms that Cicero was strongly influenced by the Greek culture that had permeated the literature of rhetoric and philosophy. Roman exposure to Greek philosophy during the second century BC eventually resulted in a broad appreciation and acceptance of the Hellenistic perception that philosophy should be of practical value as a guide in the understanding and interpretation of, for instance, the practice of politics. This view was consistent with Cicero’s own practice of the philosophy of the New Academy, which subjected everything to minute analysis. In other words, Cicero’s academic approach could enable him to consider the Roman political situation theoretically.

Discussion in Chapter Six focuses on those influences of Greek political theory that are consistently evident in Cicero’s political theorising on the transformation of the Roman political scene. Evidence found in the writings of Cicero suggests the presence of the Polybian cyclical theory (*anacyclosis*) which, according to Polybian precepts, enables the observer both to explain and predict patterns of constitutional change. This is especially evident in the dialogue *De republica*, which reflects Cicero’s perception of a declining *res publica*. Greek theoretical influences on Cicero, however, are evidently not only limited to the political theory of Polybius. Frequent allusions show the influence of similar politico-philosophical speculation drawn from Greek writers such as Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Dicaearchus, Panaetius, Herodotos and Xenophon.

Cicero's use of these sources indicates his natural tendency to avoid deterministic thinking, so that his approach to the concept of cyclical constitutional patterns is considerably more flexible than that allowed by the Polybian theoretical model. In contrast with the Polybian deterministic theory of cyclical political decline, Cicero's writings convey the concept of a different pattern of recurrence, one that had originated from the typical Roman obsession with the *mos maiorum*. This type of recurrence stemmed from the accepted requirement that the past should function as a moral guide for the present. Moral degeneration, together with its corresponding political decline, was usually slowed by recourse to either severe censorship, or by the bestowal of extraordinary powers to outstanding individuals, as measures to return the Roman state to a position of political equilibrium.

Chapter Seven explores Cicero's innovation in adapting the Greek concept of the 'ideal ruler as benefactor', as found in the writings of not only Plato and Aristotle, but also in Hesiod, Homer and Xenophon. Adaptation of Greek 'good king' theory contributed in the shaping of the Ciceronian perception of rulers as protectors, saviours and benefactors (*rectores et conservatores*) of the Roman state. Cicero's attempt to bridge the existing divide between Greek philosophy and Roman political practice thus constituted a blending of Greek theory and Roman political ideas that resulted in the creation of his own concept of the *rector rei publicae*. This became to him the embodiment of the Roman supreme statesman. However, in Chapter Nine it becomes clear that the 'ideal statesman' as envisaged by Cicero never materialised in fact. The Roman equivalent of the philosophical guide to such a statesman, as derived from the Greek works of, for instance, Dicaearchus (noted in Chapter Seven) also did not gain substance on the Roman political stage, for (as indicated in Chapter Seven section three), Caesar, as Pompeius had done previously, consistently ignored Cicero's tentative overtures, choosing not to use him in his mooted capacity of philosophical advisor. Cicero in April 49 acknowledged Pompeius' rejection of his aspirations to be a philosophical guide when he reflected upon his disappointments. Pompeius had failed to live up to Cicero's own ideal of a prudent statesman (*Att.* 8.11 Chapter Nine section one). Cicero had eventually reluctantly to subscribe to the Herodotean view that an immoderate degree of power in some individuals ultimately brings on political disaster. Both the cases of Pompeius and Caesar, according to Cicero, proved this, although, in the case of Caesar, he never explicitly commented on Caesar's rejection of his proffered role of philosophical advisor.

Chapter Ten section two shows that the circumstances of the period immediately following the death of Caesar were seen and interpreted by Cicero as an indication of both continuity and change, but in neither the Polybian cyclical model nor the Roman pattern of reconstitution which aimed to retain a balance. This observation led Cicero to formulate his predictions for the future Roman state as a rational forecast which he based on his earlier theorising.

In sum, Cicero's earlier theoretical models proved impracticable. He was being relegated to an observer of a pattern of constitutional change that was transforming the *res publica* into a state of absolute rule. The imminent danger of absolute rule, the advent of monocracy, had been already foreseen by Cicero in 63, so he claimed in April 49 in *Att.* 10.4.5.¹ His allusion here in 49 to a 'storm which disrupted the *res publica*', is expanded in the philosophical works of 44, where he appears to have accepted those aspects of the Polybian model that could be used to indicate irreversible Roman constitutional decline. The final result of this process of political change was, however, neither a Polybian cyclical rebirth, nor regeneration in the traditional Roman pattern of refoundation of the *res publica* by constitutional means, but, instead, the 'founding' of an irrevocably new pattern of constitutional development, that of imperial Roman autocracy. This *res nova* was feared, theorised about and reluctantly foreseen by Cicero, though never assimilated as a new and improved model within the confines of his conservative republican heart.

Application of the criterion of **consistency** in Cicero's attitude to the various political players under his scrutiny shows considerable fluctuation. Cicero as an observer displays conflicting feelings about these same individuals. This inconsistent attitude appears less noticeable in the case of Caesar than with Pompeius. To come to an understanding of Cicero's inconsistent attitude towards these political players, Cicero's relationship with both protagonists was examined in Chapter Nine. Section one suggested that Cicero's public presentation of Pompeius, both in his speeches and letters to the senate, was inconsistent with his treatment of the same man in his private correspondence and in his theoretical treatises. Praise of Pompeius in Cicero's speeches at different times during their relationship seemed to be in response both to political expediency and the rhetorical needs of the moment. Similarly, conflicting feelings expressed by Cicero about the great

¹ 'eaque ipsa tempestate eversam esse rem publicam quam ego XIII annis ante prospexerim'.

man in the correspondence were often in response to Pompeius' apparent emotional indifference towards Cicero himself and the obscurity of his true intentions concerning the welfare of the state. Cicero was conscious of this inconsistency in his own attitude towards Pompeius. This is evidenced in his private correspondence both to Atticus and to his brother Quintus. Inconsistent allusion to Pompeius appears to correspond with both Cicero's personal vicissitudes and his political involvement at any given time. This is evident in Cicero's negative evaluation of Pompeius during the period 60 to 58. This period witnessed Cicero's private expression of his disappointment with Pompeius, both as a man and as a statesman, in a series of letters. Pompeius' political conduct, in concert with his political allies Caesar and Crassus, was perceived by Cicero as *contra rem publicam*. Likewise, the letters to Atticus and Quintus reflect Cicero's bitter emotional response to the failure of Pompeius to prevent his exile in 58.

This fluctuating portrait drawn by Cicero of Pompeius was once more adjusted in 57 when Cicero, in gratitude to Pompeius (who had, after all, brought about his recall from exile), lavished the latter with praise. However, it seems that, when Cicero during 56 had come to realise that the alliance and co-operation between Pompeius and the optimates were only temporary, unresolved doubts about Pompeius returned. At that time Cicero's archenemy Clodius was being reconciled with Pompeius, and the conference at Luca, involving Caesar as well, followed shortly afterwards. The negative attitude of Cicero towards Pompeius lasted well into 53 when, in the face of threatening danger to the *res publica*, Cicero's confidence in Pompeius returned. This confidence allowed Cicero once more to present the general as a bulwark of the *res publica*. The events of the civil war finally forced Cicero again to view Pompeius in a different light. In the final denouement, Cicero acknowledged by March 49 that the entire political scene as he had interpreted it in the past had changed, and, with it, his present perception (*Att.* 9.10.3).²

In this chapter, then, we saw that Cicero by 49 was very conscious of his own inconsistent portrayal, stemming from his fluctuating perceptions, of Pompeius, the man whom he once had idolised: '*sed cum illo Pompeio qui tum erat aut qui mihi esse videbatur*' (*Att.* 8.7.2). It seems that this late awareness in Cicero of his own self-deception during the fifties (which had incapacitated his ability for long-term prediction) represents progression and conscious revision in his thought. Chapter Ten explores how

² '*alia res nunc tota est, alia mens mea*'.

Cicero, apparently having accepted his own shortcomings as an observer, expresses more neutral and detached criticism of Pompeius in his theoretical works.

In contrast with Cicero's inconsistent attitude towards Pompeius, section two (Chapter Nine) shows that his attitude towards Caesar proved more consistent. It appears that Cicero had, from early on (that is, since his own consulship) detected signs indicating the danger of Caesar's populist political agenda. Against such a danger, including possible future autocracy (first symbolised by the collusion of the triumvirs) Cicero consistently warned. This period, from 59 onwards, saw the Ciceronian literary adumbration of 'Caesar tyrannus', in contrast with his concept of the 'good king' which at this time was taking shape in Cicero's mind.

It appears that the public reconciliation between Cicero and Caesar during the latter half of the fifties was superficial, as Cicero's private correspondence with Atticus testifies. Neither did Cicero's more positive portrayal in public of Caesar during this period conceal his private distrust of the man and his policy, and of his benevolent overtures to Cicero's coterie immediately after the outbreak of civil war. Rather, from 49 onwards, in Cicero's view, Caesar, and not Pompeius, had become tyranny personified. Out of this perception, then, Cicero apparently began to construe a future which was becoming an extended version of the turbulent present. During this period Cicero often portrayed the present regime with the same *acerbitas* with which he viewed the disturbances of the Sullan era. Even Cicero's overt public praise of the dictator during 46 is ironically qualified in his letters to former Pompeians. In early 45 Cicero's attitude of political despair deepened with the traumatic disarray in his private life culminating in the loss of his daughter Tullia. His personal trauma was reflected in the intensity of his acute and careless display of political discontent with and resentment of the present regime. So, as in the case of Pompeius, Cicero's attitude towards Caesar is reflected in his pessimistic political outlook, heightened by his experience of political and personal loss. In his private letters to Atticus Cicero consistently persists with emotionally-laden criticism against Caesar. This is followed from August 45 onwards by what appears to be a new and planned agenda of public but veiled criticism against Caesar. Apart from consistent criticism of Caesar in the private correspondence, evidence of stronger political undertones is to be found in Cicero's theoretical works of this period. After Caesar's death in 44, veiled criticism is exchanged for open condemnation of the deceased dictator

(a condemnation still consistent with Cicero's past views), especially in those passages of *De officiis* where the political issue of justification for Caesar's assassination was treated.

Inconsistency of attitude in Cicero was not only evident in his approach to Caesar and Pompeius, but was also a consistent stylistic feature of his approach to various other correspondents. Chapter Three shows that Cicero's letters to Atticus at the first level differs in style and tone from the style of address to all other correspondents, even Caelius. It has a high incidence of Graecisms, also various literary quotations and proverbs, with a corresponding high frequency of code-switching between Latin and Greek. This reflects the nature of the close relationship and understanding that existed between writer and confidant. This is consistent with the Roman perception of Greek as the language of confidentiality, even, in modern idiom, of 'male bonding'.

We have seen that Atticus as addressee becomes a sounding board for Cicero's thoughts, someone whom Cicero describes as an *alter ego* with whom he is able to converse as if it were with himself (*ego tecum tamquam mecum loquor*).³ Extensive deliberation and discussion takes place between Cicero and Atticus and this is reflected in the correspondence when Cicero turns to Atticus for advice, sometimes formulating his thoughts as theses. These letters often take on the appearance of a dialogue when Cicero sets out Atticus' views while he responds with his own views on the matters discussed.

It is generally accepted that Cicero had a higher regard for the political insight of Atticus than for that of Caelius. Chapter Eight shows that, whereas Caelius, in his capacity as Cicero's informant, needed in 51 to be persuaded with flattery to send the latest relevant news from Rome, Atticus, as politically inactive outsider, is deemed both an exceptionally sound mantis (μάντις ἄριστος) and a born politician (*es natura πολιτικός*),⁴ someone who is able to deliver an oracle (χρησμός) when so required.⁵

So a different approach is followed when Cicero corresponds with Caelius. Despite Cicero's pose of former teacher, sometimes praising, often reprimanding his protégé, the letters to Caelius show greater formality than those written to Atticus. This more formal

³ *Att.* 8.14.2.

⁴ *Att.* 4.6.1.

⁵ *Att.* 9.10.5.

approach appears to be indicative of deliberate writing and shows Cicero carefully considering and selecting his words. Caelius is treated as one who is recognised and admired for his sensitive reading of the current trends in Roman politics. However, Cicero appears not oblivious of Caelius' reputation as an opportunist. Uncertain as to how complete and sincere the information received from Caelius was (he had, after all, only recently begun sympathising with the *boni*), Cicero seems to have maintained a somewhat guarded attitude towards Caelius. We see Cicero always seeking information from Caelius, but being less forthcoming with his own views on the present situation than in the correspondence with Atticus. Caelius has to be constantly praised, even flattered, for both his remarkable intellect and political awareness (as indicated by Cicero's habitual inclusion of the epithet *πολιτικώτερον*). Flattery is a consistent feature of Cicero's correspondence with Caelius.

Cicero's tactful, guarded approach to Caelius becomes more noticeable once Caelius has joined the Caesarian ranks. Cicero, for instance, in a letter to Caelius (*Fam.* 2.16 which may very likely have come to Caesar's attention), implies that the complaints voiced by himself in some of his previous letters were not intended against anyone in particular, but were aimed against the present unfortunate circumstances of civil war. Neutrality as an option, so Cicero claimed, was preferable, whatever the outcome of war.

In sum, in tone and style, Cicero's inconsistency is consistent in his diverse approaches to varying correspondents.

Next we turn to the criterion of **comparison**. Regrettably, although Caelius' political intuition was greatly admired and apparently taken for granted by Cicero, not enough evidence can be drawn from the extant correspondence between Cicero and Caelius to distinguish a clear pattern in Caelius' thought processes. For the sake of comparison of Caelius' thinking with the thought of Cicero's own we have to rely on the predictions which Caelius confidently puts forward as statements of fact. Chapter Eight shows that Caelius' letters indeed give some clues towards reading Caelius' ability to depict the present political situation at Rome during 51 and 50. Caelius showed consistent awareness of both his own position as a political observer and a view of himself as being in opposition to those around him (*Fam.* 8.6). Caelius also remained aware of external political questions such as the possibility of a Parthian attack and the consequences of

such an attack for both Rome and her provinces. Caelius integrated this broad outlook with his intimate experience of the current affairs in Rome while making his prognostications. Caelius' certainty in his predictions found expression in his confident statements about the possible outcome of future events. This contrasts with the indecision and tendency toward protracted deliberation displayed by Cicero during these years.

Chapter Four section two shows that Caesar in *De bello civili* puts himself on full public display, conveying an impression of self-assurance, creating a picture of himself as someone who knew exactly what he was about to accomplish. This is in stark contrast to the general atmosphere of uncertainty that prevailed among the majority of Caesar's contemporaries and the unease that still clouded the thought of Cicero and may be read from most of the letters to Atticus of the time. Whereas Cicero's letters teem with a vocabulary that denotes uncertainty, the heroic 'Caesar' in *De bello civili* radiates clarity of thought, calculated intention and apparent level-headedness. Throughout the narrative of *De bello civili*, for instance, we encounter vocabulary that carries a sense of conviction (*sentio, credo, aequo animo*).

Chapter Ten indicates that whereas Caelius consistently uses very assertive words (*video*) in formulating his forecasts (as does Atticus), Cicero, in contrast to both Caesar and Caelius (and also Atticus), maintains a hesitant approach, on the whole not committing himself to definite forecasting. Yet this changes over time. The hesitant tone (indicated by verbs such as *puto, spero* and *videtur*) that characterised his correspondence during 50 is gradually replaced from 49 onwards by verbs that carry a sense of conviction. This may be taken to mean that Cicero at this time was starting to claim that he knew what was going to happen. This becomes evident in both Cicero's increasing allusion to himself as a 'prophet' and his use of other terms indicating prognostication in a more political context. Yet his ostensible assurance was at best still tentative, and still bordered on vacillation.

Comparison of the thought of Cicero with the views of respectively Caelius, and Caesar (and Atticus as these may be deduced from Cicero's replies), illustrates the truism that bias and partiality are both ubiquitous and unavoidable in contemporary narrative. This truism naturally subsumes consideration of the criterion of **subjectivity**. Chapters Four and Nine by the nature of their discussion focus on both Caesar's and Cicero's subjective

interpretation and presentation of events. These chapters, together with Chapter Seven, stress that neither Caesar nor Cicero was able to distance himself from thoughts of personal advantage. Chapter Seven, in particular, stresses that Cicero's portrayal of the success of Pompeius, for instance, was related to Cicero's perception of both his own fortune and that of the state. From this it may be taken that Cicero's correspondence acts in some instances not only as a corrective for the views presented by Caesar in *De bello civili*, but also as 'confirmation' - more probably, source - of events presented by the later literary tradition on the civil war.

Moving on to the criterion of **integration**, the dissertation sought to explore the degree to which Cicero was able to relate in its entirety the Roman political picture from the past (as he himself construed it) to his own present. Discussion throughout shows that Cicero's integration of various aspects of problems perceived by him developed as events unravelled. That there had been change was often clearer to him than what the change comprised. His integration was more often than not limited to comparison of his subjective construction of the events of 59 with an equally subjective construction of the crisis of 49 onward. Cicero in time started discerning changes in the political picture as they unfolded. This, in turn, as we have seen, led Cicero to project future Roman political trends. Chapter Eleven compares Cicero's view of the political situation in 59 (when his political judgement was very much clouded by his own consciousness of personal danger) with his view in 44 and 43. It appears that Cicero by this time has assumed the position of someone who has the ability, that is, the wisdom, both to interpret the past and predict the future. In Chapters Ten and Eleven, then, we see Cicero in all earnest going through the motions of a *haruspex*, inspecting the entrails of the corpse politic of the *res publica*. Political theorising in Cicero's correspondence during this time is also integrated into his theoretical work of the same period. Thus we find Cicero presenting the Romulus myth in *De officiis* as the primeval Roman paradigm of the kind of absolute rule that he perceives as now having overtaken the state. Cicero has therefore integrated a particular view of the past into his interpretation of the present, which he sees as preordained, also for the future of Roman politics. In short, Cicero interpreted his own shifting present in the light of his understanding of the past as he had known it, and from that he projected what would happen next. That events proved his projections to be realistic, is the topic of the Epilogue.

13. Epilogue: ‘*atque ea, quae lapsu tandem cecidere vetusto*’¹

The dissertation has tried to show that the frequency of prophetic vocabulary in Cicero’s correspondence gradually increased from 49 BC onwards, suggesting an awareness in Cicero of his own prognostic ability. Three important periods in the development of Cicero’s own perception of his mantic wisdom can be distinguished: the year 49 BC, which signalled a crucial turning point in Roman politics, next a middle period (46 to 45 BC), which was overshadowed by Caesar’s autocracy, and finally, the last months of Cicero’s life from 44 onwards. For evidence of his train of thought relating to the first period we had to rely on Cicero’s correspondence, whereas details about the second and final phases could be deduced from additional gleanings from Cicero’s philosophical writings.

Cicero ‘*haruspex*’ has been long in his careful inspection of the entrails of a convulsing *res publica*. Having witnessed Cicero at work, inspecting the *exta* of a decaying *res publica*, its viscera spasmodically throbbing before the final process of decay sets in, we need, then, to say a last word about Cicero’s mantic prowess. Although fed by a rational view of what government should be, Cicero appears in the end to have depended most closely on his own ‘gut-feelings’.

We saw Cicero’s dependence on Atticus in his ‘mantic’ capacity (which Cicero saw as the ability to form sound judgements and conjectures in political matters) gradually decreasing during the early half of 49 and increasingly making way for independent theorising by Cicero himself. On February 27 (*Att.* 8.11.3) a distressed Cicero declared his intention to set out in writing his perception of the serious ‘afflictions’ (*his malis*) that had befallen the *res publica* at the time. These ‘maladies’ specifically referred to both Caesar and Pompeius, the two main contestants in a bid for power. Though unsettled by the events set in motion by Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon, Cicero here clearly indicates his preparedness to examine clinically (*considerans*) the political scenario that has recently begun to unfold. His brief exposition of the recent past lapses into a picture of himself making calculated predictions (*coniectura prospiciens*), the very opposite of the ‘unsound forecasting’ he associated with prophets in general, even those divinely inspired seers known from literature. However, in his letter to Atticus on the following

¹ Cic. *Cons.* 2 *fr.* 6.30: ‘and these events that had happened at last were long in their passing’.

day, Cicero displayed signs of uncertainty about his prognostic abilities. He had apparently reconsidered the content of the previous day's 'prophetic letter' (*scripseram ipse eas litteras quarum vaticinationem falsam esse cupio*). Here he seems to have assumed that his interpretation of events could have been wrong. Later, in May 49, when writing to Caelius (*Fam.* 2.16.6), Cicero, to all appearances even less confident of his own prognostications, refers to himself as a prophet of doom, hoping that what he foresaw would not come forth (*sed ego fortasse vaticinor et haec omnia meliores habebunt exitus*). This, however, he suspected, was not to be the desired outcome (*velim ita sit; sed tamen*).

By 46 Cicero appears to have gained in his confidence as interpreter of political circumstances. It would seem as though Cicero's increasing recourse to philosophy in turn enhanced his expertise in prediction, and brought about the clarity of mind and conduct envisaged by Cicero twenty years earlier in the *Prognostica* (73-74), where he places a high premium on the use of philosophy as a skill to enhance prognostication.

Cicero's letter to A. Caecina in October 46, written in the kind of augural language to be expected from one prophet to another (*Fam.* 6.6), rings forth with consummate confidence in the writer's prognostic ability. Here Cicero emerges as the type of prophet described in *Div.* 1.111, the prophet who is required to found his conjectures on reason.

From this time on it becomes increasingly evident that Cicero was not hesitant to see himself in the roles of various Homeric seers. For instance, here he had cast himself as Amphiaraus (*Fam.* 6.6.6) a prophet of doom;² references to the soothsayer Kalchas,³ or men renowned for their exceptional wisdom, may be similarly interpreted. For instance, in his letter to Dolabella in 44, Cicero assumed the role of a Nestor,⁴ an exceptional adviser to whom the consul Dolabella could turn for guidance (*Fam.* 9.14.2). Cicero's allusions to prophets become demonstrably frequent from 45 onwards, especially in his philosophical works. Mopsus, Helenus, Kalchas and Tiresias all feature as expert

² Elsewhere in Cicero Amphiaraus features in the philosophical works: *Leg.* 2.33.7, *Tusc.* 2.60.16, *DND* 2.7.5, 3.49.1, *Div.* 1.88.4, 10.

³ See above Chapter Nine section two.

⁴ Cf. *Brut.* 40.3, *Tusc.* 5.7.12, *Sen.* 31.1.8.

soothsayers,⁵ whereas Cassandra⁶ becomes an exemplar of those prophets who are not believed, regardless of the truth they convey. With these seers Cicero shares a common factor, the inability to influence the future.⁷ Despite their exceptional prognostic powers, prophets of all kinds in general do not seem to have the power to influence their present or deflect future events.

Some months after the death of Caesar, in 43, Cicero appears to have finally accepted the futility of resisting the current trend of Roman political change. In June 43, writing to Cornificius, Cicero alludes to those (himself included) that were resuming the struggle as 'relapsed invalids': '*ut enim gravius aegrotant ii qui, cum levati morbo videntur*' (Fam. 12.30.2). This defeatist attitude is reminiscent of the similar view that he held in January 45, when he declared that since death is the inevitable end of all '*cum omnium rerum mors sit extremum*', so too, the *res publica* was lost '*amissa*' (Fam. 6.21.1). Cicero apparently accepted this as fact. There would be no reconstruction of the old order. This Cicero claims was foreseen by himself and his friend C. Toranius in 49 already.⁸ Now, in 45, Cicero saw no return to the former state of things: '*nunc vero eversis omnibus rebus*', because '*omnium rerum mors sit extremum*'. What remains is the 'corpse' of a deceased body politic: '*universae rei publicae interitum ... confirmo*' (Fam. 6.21.3).

Words denoting sickness, death and decay appear to become compulsive with Cicero. This is reminiscent of the period of 59, when Cicero saw himself wasting away under the curse of tyranny '*nunc tabescimus*' (Att. 2.14.1), in a *res publica* that has perished '*tota periit*' when Pompeius' poor performance had made him look ill '*tabescat*' (2.21.1, 4).

⁵ Mopsus: DND 2.7.5, Div. 1.88.1, Helenus: DND 2.7.6, Div. 1.89.2, Kalchas: Or. 74.9, Leg. 2.33.7, DND 2.7.6, Div. 1.72.10, 1.87.8, 2.63.2, 7, 2.64.6, 13, Tiresias: Tusc. 5.115.4, DND 2.7.5, Div. 1.88.4, 2.9.8.

⁶ Orat. 2.265.2, Div. 1.67.5, 1.85.11, 1.89.2, 2.112.2.

⁷ Cicero, like most mortal seers found in Homer, cannot influence the future he envisions. Cicero may try to exhort others to react, but he rarely takes direct part in the action. When he does (as does Polydamas in the *Iliad* 12.60-229), he finds his action frustrated, for instance, when he tries to influence Brutus (see above Chapter Eleven), who does not heed his advice. Cicero could even regard himself as one sharing a position similar to that of the *persona* of a Sophoclean prophet figure. A prophet such as Tiresias in the *OT*, for instance, could be seen as fulfilling the role of a 'state prophet'. In *Antigone* (10.15), for instance, he shows the habit of referring metaphorically to an illness which afflicts the city of Thebes. Cicero certainly appears to relate to this type of Sophoclean prophet figure with his own use of medical metaphors in terms of disease that is representative of moral and political disturbance.

⁸ Fam. 6.21.1 in January 45 to Toranius: '*... commemorabam te unum in tanto exercitu mihi fuisse adsensorem et me tibi, solosque nos vidisse quantum esset in eo bello mali in quo spe pacis exclusa ipsa victoria futura esset acerbissima, quae aut interitum adlatura esset, si victus esses, aut, si vicisses, servitutem*'.

So we have seen that Cicero's perception of himself as experiencing a process of 'wasting away' while the *res publica* was undergoing a similar process of decay, became a model for his description of the *res publica* as 'dying'. This view eventually culminated in his analogy of the disease-riddled corpse of the *res publica* 'autopsied' in his theoretical works. This metaphor is not consistently applied. The body politic is sometimes already dead, sometimes in the grip of a fatal disease. No remedy is truly efficacious. In his *Tusculanae Disputationes* (4.24-25) Cicero states that, in the event of reason not being applied as a Socratic remedy for illness (we may assume here that Cicero is alluding to his 'reasonable' ideal of the prudent statesman), the affliction will remain 'within the veins' and become fixed, infesting the vital organs (*viscera*), causing disease which 'cannot be eradicated' as it has been permanently established (*morbis et aegrotatio quae evelli inveterata non possunt*). Such a degenerative process Cicero predicted to Atticus in May 44, when he alluded to what he saw as the late Caesar's autocracy in terms of a tree, cut down, but not eradicated (*excisa enim est arbor, non evulsa*). The strength of its root was proved by 43, when, from amongst the twigs sprouting beside the fallen trunk of Caesar, up shot a verdant Augustus, to tower above the Roman forest as the tallest trunk, sprouting vigorous growth – autocracy disguised under a crown of familiar foliage.

‘*Edidit haec Cicero; quae iam matura videtis.*’⁹

The events of December 43 culminated in what could be taken as the final sacrificial procedure that marked the end of the 'dying' *res publica* as it was known to Cicero. For within the butchered and lacerated carcass of the slain body politic, a real *haruspex* would search in vain amongst its *exta* for the unscathed remains of the one vital organ needed for inspection on the altar, and he would have to announce, in the language of *haruspicium*, that the *caput* of the liver was missing, and that, indeed, if it was to be found, it would in all probability be a *caput caesum*, a sign of profound change. Nay, indeed, such a *haruspex* would be searching in vain for more than a *caput* - for the very excised heart of the state, Cicero himself.

⁹

My adaptation of Cicero's Latin version of *Il.* 2.330: κείνος τὼς ἀγόρευε· τὰ δὴ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται. which reads: '*edidit haec Calchas*' (*Div.* 2.64.13).

Though Cicero '*haruspex*' in the end was himself a victim, and his severed remains, his head, hands and tongue, became the telling proof of an eviscerated *res publica*; neither his voice nor his thought was silenced. The scrutinising Cicero that is to be encountered between the leaves of his extant correspondence still, throughout the ages, provokes mixed feelings in scholars and poets alike, when they read these words: ¹⁰

'Habes augurium meum.'



¹⁰

Cic. *Fam.* 6.6.12.

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